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LESSONS
STANDARD EDITION

1 Timothy & Titus

Letters to Leaders and Laity



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Check with your local Adventist Book Center for the companion book to the Sabbath School lessons.

Introduction to 1 Timothy and Titus

Our lessons this quarter are based on the letters of the apostle Paul to two young ministers and missionaries—Timothy and Titus. Written against the backdrop of the first-century Christian church, these letters contain admonitions and guidelines that are timeless. They speak to *all* who carry responsibility in the church—every follower of Christ. Because we are a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9), every believer is called to contribute to the life of the church and to fulfill Christ's mission in the world.

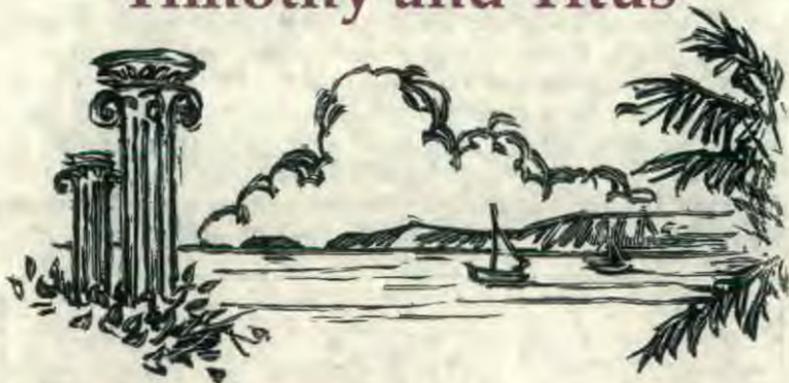


From Homer A. Kent, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 50.

OUTLINE OF 1 TIMOTHY

- I. Salutation, 1:1, 2.
- II. The Charge to Rebuke False Teachers, 1:3-20.
- III. The Universality of Christian Worship, 2:1-15.
- IV. Prerequisites for Christian Leaders, 3:1-13.
- V. The Christian Message, 3:14 to 4:5.
- VI. Practical Counsel for Ministers, 4:6-16.
- VII. The Minister as Church Administrator, 5:1 to 6:19.
- VIII. Paul's Final Charge to Timothy, 6:20, 21.

The World of Timothy and Titus



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 1 Tim. 1:1-3; Titus 1:4.

MEMORY TEXT: "Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Timothy 1:2).

KEY THOUGHT: In the letters to Timothy and Titus we rediscover this week the apostle Paul's deep love for two of his sons in the faith. He is concerned for their spiritual well-being and for their faithfulness to God's call. Who were these young ministers? What was the climate in their churches—Ephesus and Crete? What special relevance do Paul's introductory words to them have for us today?

CARING CONCERN CHARACTERIZES PAUL. Paul's communications with the churches and with individuals (such as Timothy, Titus, and Philemon) reveal not only his need for fellowship but also the depth of his concern for the body of Christ—the church. All of Paul's letters were written to meet immediate situations. Because human nature and human needs remain basically the same, these letters have a special message for us today.

An understanding of the historical and cultural background in which these letters were written is essential to an appreciation of their messages. The circumstances, the personalities, and the issues of the time reveal that Christ's timeless messages are as important to us as they were to first-century Christians.

THE AUTHOR OF 1 TIMOTHY AND TITUS (1 Tim. 1:1; Titus 1:1).

What authority as an author does Paul claim for himself? 1 Tim. 1:1; Titus 1:1 (compare Gal. 1:1).

God entrusted Paul with a message that, as a faithful ambassador of Jesus Christ, he communicated to the church. (See 1 Cor. 11:23.) Paul's credentials were of the highest order, "by the commandment of God" (1 Tim. 1:1).

What was the basis of Paul's claim to apostleship? Gal. 1:1, 11, 12; 2 Cor. 12:1-7, 11-13.

In the broadest sense a Christian apostle is anyone sent by Christ with a message. Barnabas, Epaphroditus, Apollos, Silvanus, and Timothy are all called "apostles." (See Acts 14:14; 1 Cor. 4:6, 9; Phil 2:25; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2:6.) But in the New Testament the word *apostle* generally refers to the twelve disciples and Paul. The twelve associated with Christ, and Paul also, received direct communications from Him. (See 1 Cor. 15:5, 8.) An apostle in this sense was one who had received special revelations from Christ for the church and the world.

Of what significance is the fact that Paul speaks of both the Father and the Son as "our Saviour"?

The Father as Saviour: 1 Tim. 1:1; 2:3; 4:10.

Christ as Saviour: Eph. 5:23; Phil. 3:20; 2 Tim. 1:10.

The work of saving lost humanity is the work of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). It was "through the eternal Spirit" that Christ "offered himself without spot to God" (Heb. 9:14). "He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5, NIV). It is our one God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) whose saving presence is in our hearts. (See John 14:23.)

What are the implications for us of the fact that Paul's messages were inspired of God? How should this fact influence our attitude to the messages contained in 1 Timothy and Titus?

TIMOTHY, PAUL'S SON IN THE FAITH (1 Tim. 1:2).

Where and when did Paul first become acquainted with Timothy? Acts 16:1-3.

"Among those who had been converted at Lystra, and who were eyewitnesses of the sufferings of Paul, was one who was afterward to become a prominent worker for Christ and who was to share with the apostle the trials and the joys of pioneer service in difficult fields. This was a young man named Timothy. When Paul was dragged out of the city, this youthful disciple was among the number who took their stand beside his apparently lifeless body and who saw him arise, bruised and covered with blood, but with praises upon his lips because he had been permitted to suffer for the sake of Christ."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 184, 185.

With what term of endearment did Paul address Timothy? 1 Tim. 1:2 (compare 2 Tim. 1:2).

Timothy had been converted to Christianity on Paul's first missionary journey (about A.D. 47). From then on Paul could refer to him as his spiritual child (1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2).

Timothy's mother was a Jewess, but his father was a Greek (Acts 16:1). Because of Jewish prejudice, Paul circumcised Timothy (verse 3), who then accompanied Paul on the second missionary journey (Acts 16-18). During Paul's three-year stay at Ephesus on the third missionary journey, he sent Timothy to Corinth to settle the divisions that had arisen there (1 Cor. 4:17). Later Paul and Timothy were together in Macedonia (Acts 19:21, 22) and Corinth (Rom. 16:21). Timothy accompanied Paul on his visit to Jerusalem at the end of the third missionary journey (Acts 20:4; 21:17). He was in Rome during Paul's first imprisonment there, about A.D. 61-63. (See Phil. 1:1; 2:19-23; Col. 1:1.) Between his first and second imprisonments in Rome, Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy (about A.D. 64), urging him to remain as pastor of the church in Ephesus.

What does Paul's love and concern for Timothy over a period of years teach us regarding our responsibility to those who are younger in the faith than we are?

RICH BLESSINGS FOR BELIEVERS (1 Tim. 1:2).

What special blessings did Paul wish Timothy to enjoy?
1 Tim. 1:2.

"Grace is God's unmerited favor in operation in the heart of his child, and peace is that child's consciousness of having been reconciled with God through Christ. Grace is the fountain, and peace is the stream which issues from this fountain (cf. Rom. 5:1)." —William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1957), p. 54. Peace involves an absence of condemnation (Rom. 5:1; 8:1) because Christ's grace has become a saving power in the heart. (See 1 Cor. 1:4-7; 2 Cor. 9:8, 14.) Heavenly peace is a precious reality even in the midst of trouble (Ps. 119:165).

Consider the use of the word *mercy* in the following passages. To what specifically does the word refer? Luke 10:33, 37 (compare Rom. 9:23; 11:31; Isa. 54:7).

The word *mercy* is found in the apostolic salutations of Paul only in 1 Timothy 1:2 and 2 Timothy 1:2. Paul may well have added this to the blessings for Timothy in view of the challenges that he knew faced the young pastor in Ephesus. The city was largely devoted to the worship of Artemis, a goddess of fertility.

"The usual way of distinguishing between *grace* and *mercy* is to say that grace pardons while mercy commiserates; grace is God's love toward the guilty, mercy his love toward the wretched or pitiable; grace concerns the state, mercy the condition. To a considerable extent this distinction is correct. . . . Nevertheless, the word employed in the original . . . is often somewhat broader in scope. It indicates not only the actual outpouring of *pity* upon those *in distress* but also the underlying lovingkindness of which God's creatures, particularly his people, are the objects, regardless of whether . . . they are viewed as being 'in deep misery' or more generally 'in need of help.'" —Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*, p. 55.

Think of some practical ways we can contribute to the peace of those around us by showing them mercy.

THE CHURCH IN EPHEBUS (1 Tim. 1:3).

Why did Paul urge Timothy to remain as pastor in Ephesus? 1 Tim. 1:3. How was Christianity first introduced to the city of Ephesus? Acts 18:18-21.

Paul made a return visit to Ephesus early in his third missionary journey (Acts 19:1). It was during this visit that he spent about three years preaching and instructing. The results for the gospel were great, despite the opposition. (Read Acts 19.)

When returning to Jerusalem at the end of his third missionary journey, what warnings and counsel did Paul give to the Ephesian elders? Acts 20:28-31.

"Paul trembled for the church as, looking into the future, he saw the attacks which she must suffer from both external and internal foes. With solemn earnestness he bade his brethren guard vigilantly their sacred trust."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 395.

Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus during his first Roman imprisonment. He wrote of the unity of believers that results from their acceptance of the gospel of salvation.

After his first imprisonment, Paul wrote his first Epistle to Timothy, urging him to remain in Ephesus. Paul passed on God's instruction, not only concerning the manner in which the church congregation was to be organized and administered but also concerning the best means of dealing with falsehood. Soundness of doctrine had to be coupled with active, fervent love if the church was to survive and fulfill its mission in a hostile world.

The Ephesian church was the model shown to John and used in Revelation to depict the experience of the Christian church in the first century A.D. (Rev. 2:1-7). The church, founded by Paul, nurtured by Timothy and later by John himself, had lost its first love. Overcomers would be given the privilege of eating of the tree of life.

Why do you believe the Lord is just as concerned for the salvation of the people in your city or town as He was for the salvation of the Ephesians? What are you doing to cooperate with His efforts to save them?

PAUL'S CIRCUMSTANCES AT THE TIME OF WRITING
(1 Tim. 1:3).

What were Paul's circumstances at the end of his first Roman imprisonment? Acts 28:30, 31. As you read the outline below, meditate on Paul's tireless zeal illustrated by his frequent journeys.

The following is an outline of Paul's possible travels after his release from Rome, during the years A.D. 63-66.

Paul is released from prison and sends Timothy to Philippi with word of his release (Phil. 2:19-23).

Paul journeys toward Asia Minor, and leaves Titus on the island of Crete (Acts 2:11; Titus 1:5).

Paul travels through Ephesus and on to Colossae as he had planned (Philemon 22; compare Col. 4:9), then returns to Ephesus.

Timothy, who has come from Philippi, joins Paul in Ephesus. When Paul leaves he asks Timothy to remain in Ephesus to minister to believers there (1 Tim. 1:3, 4).

Paul goes to Macedonia (Phil. 2:24; 1 Tim. 1:3). He hopes to return to Ephesus shortly, but suspects that his absence may be prolonged (1 Tim. 3:14, 15). From Macedonia (Philippi?) he writes two epistles, 1 Timothy and Titus. He journeys to Nicopolis (in Epirus), where he spends the winter with Titus (Titus 3:12). He then possibly travels to Spain (Rom. 15:24), taking Titus with him. From Spain, Paul goes to Asia Minor and leaves Trophimus at Miletus, south of Ephesus (2 Tim. 4:20).

In Troas he visits Carpus, and leaves his cloak in Carpus's home (2 Tim. 4:13). He then goes to Rome, where he is re-arrested. (It is unsure where the arrest occurred—Troas, Corinth, Rome, or elsewhere.)—Adapted from Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*, pp. 39, 40. "The trials and anxieties that Paul had endured had preyed upon his physical powers. The infirmities of age were upon him. . . . As the time of his labor grew shorter, his efforts became more intense. There seemed to be no limit to his zeal. Resolute in purpose, prompt in action, strong in faith, he journeyed from church to church, in many lands, and sought by every means within his power to strengthen the hands of the believers . . . [that] they might remain steadfast."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 488.

What specific ministries for others should you undertake in view of Paul's devoted service for His Lord?

FURTHER STUDY: To refresh your mind about major aspects of the life of Paul, read: Acts 7:58-8:4; 9:1-31; 28:17-31. Read also "At Liberty" and "The Final Arrest" in *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 485-491.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What insights can you gain from the record of Timothy's upbringing?
2. How may we as older Christians contribute to the spiritual welfare of our youth?
3. Although Timothy and Paul differed in age and personality, they worked together harmoniously for the churches. What special lessons can we learn from their experience regarding the relationship that should exist between younger and older persons working for Christ?
4. We will discover that Paul gave counsel to Timothy that is not entirely palatable to some persons in the twentieth century. What does this week's lesson indicate about our obligation to take this counsel seriously?

SUMMARY: The letters of Paul the apostle to Timothy and Titus were penned more than nineteen hundred years ago. Since then Christianity has become a major world religion. Nevertheless, the local church is still the basic organization of corporate worship, fellowship, and propagation of the gospel. To understand better why Paul wrote the counsel he did regarding church organization, the functions of church leaders, the relationships of members to one another and to the world, an understanding of the place and time is both helpful and essential. The counsel contained in these two pastoral letters is thus relevant and timely today.

Teaching Sound Doctrine



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 1 Tim. 1:3-11.

MEMORY TEXT: "The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith" (1 Timothy 1:5, RSV).

KEY THOUGHT: False doctrine destroys Christian love among believers. Because it undermines faith, it leads away from conformity to God's will.

ONLY THE GOSPEL AWAKENS LOVE AND OBEDIENCE. Paul writes to reassure Timothy of his divine appointment. Timothy's mission was to shepherd the church in Ephesus during a difficult period (1 Tim. 1:3). The church was undergoing an onslaught from teachers of "other doctrine." This heresy provided an immediate reason for Paul to write his first letter to Timothy. What could be the specific nature of this heresy that was afflicting the Ephesian church? First Timothy 1:4 provides some hints.

The glorious gospel of Jesus Christ was to be the theme and content of Timothy's ministry in this difficult situation. Timothy was not to become discouraged, for his commission and hope were from—and in—the Lord Jesus Christ (see 1 Tim. 1:1). He was to brace himself for confrontation with those within the Ephesian church whose speculative teachings were destroying Christian unity and obedience to God's law.

TIMOTHY'S CHALLENGE IN EPHEBUS (1 Tim. 1:3).

Why did Paul charge Timothy to remain in Ephesus while he went northward into Macedonia? 1 Tim. 1:3.

Our service for God is a divine commission; it is a compulsion that depends upon a spiritual perception both of duty and privilege. (See 2 Cor. 5:14.) Paul encouraged Timothy with the assurance that Heaven's unlimited resources of grace, mercy, and peace were his. Paul reminded him that his own difficult and challenging ministry had been undergirded by divine power (1 Tim. 1:12).

What motivates some church members to "teach . . . other doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:3)? 2 Tim. 4:3; Titus 1:11.

Some false teachers are sincere but wrong. Some overemphasize a Bible truth and make themselves fanatics. When we lose sight of the Lord Jesus Christ, selfish, unregenerate human nature takes control. Under the guise of spiritual ministry, the deceptive and destructive distortions of Satan gain a foothold, first in the life of the self-appointed "teacher," then in the lives of sincere-but-ill-informed members of the church. All believers constantly need the guiding, protective ministry of the Holy Spirit. (See John 16:13.)

Some Bible scholars have taken the position that the false teachers in Ephesus came from the ranks of the church elders. "Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders, as recorded in Acts 20:17-35, clearly predicts that the 'fierce wolves' who 'will not spare the flock' will be 'some men from your own group' (vv. 29-30). That the false teachers were therefore probably elders is supported by several items from 1 Timothy: their presuming to be 'teachers of God's law' (v. 7), a responsibility of the elders (5:17; cf. 3:2); the fact that two are named and excommunicated by Paul (1:19-20), . . . and the repeated concern about elders in this letter."—Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), pp. 5, 6.

What do you consider to be an appropriate reaction on your part to false doctrine being taught in the church? Do you have the same mandate that Paul and Timothy had to correct the false teachers?

TEACH THE TRUTH.

What forceful language does Paul use to direct Timothy in dealing with false teachers? What specifically were Timothy's orders? 1 Tim. 1:3.

The word *charge* (KJV) comes from the Greek word meaning "give orders, command, instruct, direct." It conveys the thought of strict orders from a superior officer. As a Christian soldier under orders from the King, Timothy was to pass on these orders to the members of the church.

The "glorious gospel of the blessed God" was committed to Paul (1 Tim. 1:11). Any deviation from this "thus saith the Lord" is accursed (Gal. 1:8, 9). This divinely revealed gospel contains two major elements: (1) what Christ accomplished historically (1 Cor. 15:1-4); and (2) what He accomplishes for and in the responding human heart (Gal. 2:2, 16, 20; 3:1-3; Rom. 3:21-31; 6:18; 8:9, 10). Paul's gospel was "the word of truth"; it was "the gospel of your salvation" (Eph. 1:13), the truth about Jesus Christ and the truth of His transforming ministry for sinners. The troublesome persons in the Ephesian church were to be restrained from teaching falsehoods.

History is being repeated. "Satan hopes to involve the remnant people of God in the general ruin that is coming upon the earth. As the coming of Christ draws nigh, he will be more determined and decisive in his efforts to overthrow them. Men and women will arise professing to have some new light or some new revelation whose tendency is to unsettle faith in the old landmarks. Their doctrines will not bear the test of God's word, yet souls will be deceived. False reports will be circulated, and some will be taken in this snare. . . . This spirit will not always be manifested in open defiance of the messages that God sends, but a settled unbelief is expressed in many ways. Every false statement that is made feeds and strengthens this unbelief, and through this means many souls will be balanced in the wrong direction."
—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 295, 296.

What means do you use to determine whether a particular teaching is God's truth? How can you be sure that your own ideas are thoroughly sound? When you are convinced that you are right and someone else wrong, what attitude should you have toward them and those they have influenced?

THE NATURE OF THE EPHESIAN HERESY (1 Tim. 1:4).

What important observation did Paul make concerning the result of fables and genealogies? 1 Tim. 1:4; 6:4.

A number of points can be made about the "myths and endless genealogies" (RSV) promoted in Ephesus:

1. We are not given sufficient clues to be able to identify positively this false teaching. Commenting on 1 Timothy 1:4, J. N. D. Kelly writes: "These words come tantalizingly near disclosing the content of the heresy, but their interpretation is far from clear."—*A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1963), p. 44. This is not unusual; Paul's purpose was not to advertise error, but to proclaim the gospel.

2. The fables being taught in Ephesus and Crete are identified as Jewish (Titus 1:14). They involved controversies about the law (1 Tim. 1:7; Titus 3:9). "It has therefore been suggested that the *fables and genealogies* must have had to do with allegorical or legendary interpretations of the O.T. [Old Testament] centering on the pedigrees of the patriarchs."—Kelly, p. 44.

Many of the writings of the rabbis involved fanciful, mythological rewriting of the Old Testament. "It is a known fact that from early times the rabbis would 'spin their yarns'—and *endless* yarns they were!—on the basis of what they considered some 'hint' supplied by the Old Testament. They would take a name from a list of pedigrees (for example, from Genesis, 1 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah), and expand it into a nice story. Such interminable embroideries on the inspired record were part of the regular bill of fare in the synagogue, and were subsequently deposited in written form in that portion of *The Talmud* which is known as *Haggadah*."—William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1957), pp. 58, 59.

3. It is possible also that the church at Ephesus may have been grappling with an early form of Gnosticism. The Greeks disliked the idea that the supreme Deity had any contact with matter. Hence, the Gnostics taught that a series of spiritual beings emanated from God ("endless genealogies"), the most inferior of which brought our world into existence.

What teachings have you encountered that are a special threat to the gospel taught in God's Word?

THE TRUTH EDIFIES (1 Tim. 1:4, 5).

In place of speculative questions and theories, what kind of teaching should Christians promote? 1 Tim. 1:4.

The final clause of this verse may be translated: "which foster disputes rather than faith-centered stewardship required by God" (Hendriksen, p. 60). The word translated "stewardship" may also mean "order," "plan," or "training." True gospel teaching produces faithful stewards whose lives are ordered according to God's plan. The false teachers were generating questions and ideologies that did nothing to build the faith of the hearers. "Sound doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:10) *builds* one in the faith. Rather than resulting in "vain jangling" (verse 6), the doctrine of Christ is "according to godliness" (1 Tim. 6:3).

What was the purpose of the charge or commandment that Timothy was to give to the false teachers? 1 Tim. 1:3, 5.

The RSV translates verse 5: "whereas the aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith." The command of verse 5 is the same one that Timothy was to give certain church members in Ephesus, not to teach other doctrines (verse 3).

"*Love that issues from a pure heart.*" Far from being disruptive, love edifies (1 Cor. 13:4-7). Out of the *heart* spring the issues of life (Prov. 4:23). "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8).

"*A good conscience.*" Kelly defines *conscience* as a person's "inner awareness of the moral quality of his own actions."—*A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, p. 47. (See Rom. 2:15; 9:1.) This awareness may be influenced either by the Holy Spirit or by Satan. The choice is ours.

"*Sincere faith.*" False doctrines were causing division, hypocrisy, and many other spiritual problems. "The great characteristic of the Christian thinker is *sincerity*. He is sincere in his desire to find the truth—and in his desire to communicate it."—William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, p. 34.

First Timothy 1:4, 5 gives us the fruitage of true gospel teaching. If teaching produces other fruits, we can assume that it is not of God. (See Matt. 7:15-20.)

THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW (1 Tim. 1:6-11).

These so-called teachers were guilty of two fundamental shortcomings. What were they? 1 Tim. 1:7.

Paul urged the Galatian Christians to return to the purity of the gospel (Gal. 1:6-9).

Satan "induces many professing Christians, under pretense of honoring Christ, to cast contempt on the moral law and to teach that its precepts may be transgressed with impunity. It is the duty of every servant of God to withstand firmly and decidedly these perverters of the faith and by the word of truth fearlessly to expose their errors."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 387.

How would you explain to your neighbor the correct function of the law? 1 Tim. 1:8-11.

To use the law lawfully is not to employ it as a basis for futile and worthless argumentation. While condemning sinners to death (Rom. 3:20; 6:23; 7:7), the law points them to Christ as the only Saviour from guilt (Gal. 3:24).

"The law is not made for a righteous" person (1 Tim. 1:9). Why not? Don't Christians need the law any longer? Are Christians never "lawless and disobedient" (verse 9)? The purpose of God's law is to point out sin, whether in the heart of a believer or an unbeliever, and to point the sinner to Christ. If Christ is reigning in their hearts, believers are filled with the Holy Spirit. They are kept from sinning (1 John 3:3-9); they are not being harmed by the evil one (1 John 5:18). Hence they are not condemned by the law (Rom. 8:1). The law still is the standard of righteousness for them, but Christ's perfect example surpasses the law as the standard, and His presence removes the law's condemnation. "And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:3, 4, NIV).

How can you have the continual presence of the Holy Spirit in your heart as the means of victory over sin? What are the conditions that we must fulfill daily?

FURTHER STUDY: Read the following passages of Scripture and summarize in your own words the importance and permanency of God's law in the life of a Christian: Psalms 19:7-13; 119:1-16. Read also "The Righteousness of Christ in the Law" in *Selected Messages*, book 1, pages 236-241.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What areas of your faith are not as firm as they should be? Make these a matter of earnest prayer and study.
2. How would you explain to a questioner the purpose or place of God's moral law in your life?
3. How would you describe to an interested person the relationship between God's law and the gospel?
4. 1 Timothy 1:9 reads: "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man [person]." Who is a righteous person? What makes him or her righteous? (See 1 John 2:29; 3:7.) Is God's law still the standard of righteousness for such a person? If so, what does 1 Timothy 1:9 mean?
5. Describe some current views regarding God's law that you are convinced are unbiblical.
6. Your next-door neighbor is living with his girlfriend out of wedlock. As you become acquainted with him, he asks about your religion and agrees to study the Bible with you. When and how would you share with him the benefits and blessings of the Christian lifestyle, including Christian interpersonal relations centering in the family?

SUMMARY: Church leaders at Ephesus were to teach no other doctrine than that which Paul had received by revelation and had, in turn, taught Timothy. In the Ephesian church some leaders were influenced by both Jewish and Greek thought that was contrary to the gospel. Error had to be met by truth and a consistent Christian life witness. God's immutable law was to be presented in its proper light. God's grace was to be seen and experienced as, through the merits of Christ, believers were lifted above the "vain jangling" words of false teachings to a higher spiritual plane of living.

Proclaim and Defend the Gospel

**PAUL
FORGIVEN
Chief Sinners**

Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 1 Tim. 1:12-20.

MEMORY TEXT: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15).

KEY THOUGHT. We are inspired to be faithful to God's call to us by the fact that He forgave Paul his gross sins and qualified him for productive, sacrificial ministry.

WE CAN BE ENCOURAGED BY GOD'S MERCY TO PAUL. Judge Kaufman presided at the trial of the Russian spies, the Rosenbergs, who were sentenced to death for treason against the United States. In his summation at the end of the trial, the Rosenbergs' lawyer stated, "Your Honor, what my clients ask for is justice."

Judge Kaufman replied, "The court has given what you ask for—justice! What you really want is mercy. But that is something this court has no right to give."

That is the difference between an earthly court and God's court. If the apostle Paul, you, and I were given only justice by the heavenly court, we would be sentenced to eternal death. But because of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, mercy can justly be extended to us.

God's wonderful grace extended to gross sinners is the subject of this week's lesson. Paul recalls how he was chosen to work for God.

THE SAVING, ENABLING GRACE OF CHRIST (1 Tim. 1:12).

The priceless privilege of proclaiming the gospel "was the impelling force of Paul's ministry, and provided authority for such letters as 1 Timothy. . . . Every minister should sense this basic conviction that to him has been entrusted the grand work of revealing God's glory."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 289.

What part had Jesus played in Paul's life and ministry? 1 Tim. 1:12.

The apostle Paul saw himself as "Exhibit A" of the saving, enabling grace of Jesus Christ. As we study the passages that record Paul's testimony to his salvation (Acts 9:1-22; 22:1-21; 26:9-18), we are impressed that we share in the abundant grace and saving power of the crucified and resurrected Christ. Salvation has common features for all who experience it, but it is unique for each believing child of God.

William Barclay points out that there were four "tremendous things" for which Paul thanked Christ:

1. He thanked Him because He *chose* him.
2. He thanked Jesus because He *trusted* him who had been an arch-persecutor.
3. He thanked Jesus because He had *appointed* him; even though the appointment was to service, not to honor.
4. He thanked Him because He had *empowered* him. Christ never commissions us without providing the power to accomplish His mission.—Based on William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon* (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1975), pp. 41-43.

What does it mean to be "called" by Jesus? John 1:43 (compare John 20:21, 22). How did Jesus qualify His disciples for ministry? Matt. 10:1, 5; Acts 1:8; 2:4.

"The greatest work, the noblest effort, in which men can engage, is to point sinners to the Lamb of God. True ministers are co-laborers with the Lord in the accomplishment of His purposes. God says to them, Go, teach and preach Christ. Instruct and educate all who know not of His grace, His goodness, and His mercy."—*Gospel Workers*, pp. 18, 19.

FROM BLASPHEMER TO BELIEVER (1 Tim. 1:13).

What had been the course of Paul's life prior to his confrontation with Jesus Christ? 1 Tim. 1:13; Acts 9:1, 2; 22:4; 26:9-11.

Paul reviewed his life, not to glory in his inglorious past, but to exalt the power of God to save to the uttermost the most ardent opponent of the cross. He used three definitive expressions to describe his past attitude toward Jesus and Christians: (1) He had been "a blasphemer." (2) He had been "a persecutor." (3) He had been "injurious."

In Old Testament times, blasphemy carried the death penalty. (See Lev. 24:10-23; Matt. 26:65, 66.) Inasmuch as Jesus had not only forgiven Paul but had made him an apostle of the very gospel he had so ardently tried to destroy, Paul's gratitude and praise were boundless.

Remembering his forgiven past accomplished several things for Paul: (1) It kept him from pride. (2) It kept alive a spirit of gratitude. (3) It spurred him on to greater efforts in ministry. (4) It was a constant source of encouragement to others who mourned their past.

"A Mightier than Satan had selected Saul [Paul] to take the place of the martyred Stephen, to preach and suffer for His name, and to spread far and wide the glad tidings of salvation through His blood."—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 20.

On what basis did Paul obtain mercy? 1 Tim. 1:13.

The zeal with which he had persecuted the followers of Christ had resulted from his ignorance. In the Old Testament sanctuary service deliberate, premeditated, openly defiant sins of rebellion could not be atoned for. (See Num. 15:30.) But forgiveness was available for sins committed ignorantly or inadvertently, as well as for sins consciously committed. (See Lev. 4:2-4, 13-15, 22-31; 5:1-6, 15-17; 6:1-6.) Paul seems to be speaking out of his Jewish background. (Compare Heb. 10:26-31.) When Jesus revealed Himself to Paul, his unbelief was swept away in response to the abundant grace he received.

Can you testify to the mercy Christ has shown you in the forgiveness of your sins? Without revealing specific sins, what could you say?

GRACE, FAITH, AND LOVE (1 Tim. 1:14).

How did Paul describe the nature of Jesus' grace toward him? 1 Tim. 1:14 (compare 1 Cor. 1:4-7).

In spite of Paul's past life (1 Tim. 1:13), Jesus forgave and saved him. Centuries before Paul's day, God had revealed His divine character to Moses (Ex. 34:6). Mercy and grace have always characterized God's conduct toward fallen man. (See 2 Tim. 1:9.) Because the Messiah bore the sins of all (1 John 2:2), saving grace is *offered* to all; but it saves only those *willing to receive* it (Rom. 5:17).

What part do our own works play in our salvation? Titus 3:5 (compare Rom. 3:20; 11:6; Eph. 2:8-10; 2 Tim. 3:17).

In Paul's writings, "works of law" refer to works intended to earn favor with God. Such works do not save. Only the grace of Christ saves from sin. "Works of faith" are essential, not because they save us, but because they demonstrate that we have received God's saving grace. If works of faith (involving obedience to God's law) are lacking, that is evidence we are not saved by grace. James wrote: "I by my works will show you my faith" (James 2:18, RSV). This is why we are judged by our works (Matt. 16:27; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 22:12).

"Let no one say that your works have nothing to do with your rank and position before God. In the judgment the sentence pronounced is according to what has been done or to what has been left undone (Matt. 25:34-40)." —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 381.

What two qualities accompanied this abundant saving grace in Paul's experience? 1 Tim. 1:14.

Faith now characterized Paul's friendship with Jesus Christ. God's grace was extended to Paul, and Christ's love became evident in his life.

How would you distinguish between Christ's love and what usually passes for love in the world? What are the behavioral differences motivated by these two qualities?

MERCY FOR THE CHIEF OF SINNERS (1 Tim. 1:15-17).

With what self-condemning term did Paul describe himself in relationship to others? 1 Tim. 1:15.

In so identifying himself Paul was not seeking to focus attention upon himself. By comparing himself with others more worthy than he, the apostle was emphasizing a fact beyond all doubt—that Jesus came into this world to *save* sinners “to the uttermost [completely, fully, wholly]” (Heb. 7:25). Jesus could save Paul, who considered himself the most hopeless case. He is able to save all. (See John 3:16.) He is able to save you!

“The truly converted Christian never loses the sense of unworthiness that he experienced when he first surrendered his will to Christ. He knows that without the daily indwelling of the power of God his life would not reveal the graces of Christian character.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 290.

“The nearer we come to Jesus and the more clearly we discern the purity of His character, the more clearly we shall discern the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the less we shall feel like exalting ourselves. Those whom heaven recognizes as holy ones are the last to parade their own goodness.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 160.

What reason did Paul give for having obtained this degree of mercy? 1 Tim. 1:16.

Paul became a model of what the abundant, saving grace of Jesus does for the sinner. His life was an exhibit of Jesus’ *continuing* mercy and longsuffering. Paul was a “type” of all sinners, and was living proof of the grace of God that can change *any* sinner.

Because of this fact, praise came spontaneously to Paul’s lips: “To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever” (1 Tim. 1:17, RSV). As did Paul, so God’s redeemed people will attribute glory and praise to the only One who earned our salvation. (See Rev. 4:10, 11; 7:9-12.)

How would you explain to another person the paradox that the increasingly sanctified Christian is increasingly aware of his own sinfulness and dependence upon Christ?

PAUL'S CHARGE TO TIMOTHY (1 Tim. 1:18-20).

Why was Paul giving Timothy these instructions? Why were they relevant to Timothy's need? 1 Tim. 1:18.

"Paul here probably refers to predictions made at Timothy's ordination which described his future devotion and success in the ministry (see Acts 16:2). These words may also indicate that Timothy's 'charge' to correct those teaching a different doctrine . . . was also validated by God through prophets in the church."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 291.

What two important spiritual qualities was Timothy to safeguard? 1 Tim. 1:19.

It is not enough to proclaim the faith; we must live it! Speaking for Christ in any context is ineffective if the life of the speaker is out of harmony with the gospel. Christian witnessing is a manner of life that demonstrates Christ's power.

Who had "made shipwreck" of their faith, and what action had Paul taken? 1 Tim. 1:20.

Hymenaeus and Alexander had violated their "good conscience" and the principles of the Christian faith. Hymenaeus is probably the individual referred to in 2 Timothy 2:17. Alexander might be the coppersmith mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:14 (compare Acts 19:33, 34).

"Whom I have delivered unto Satan" (verse 20) should be considered in relation to 1 Corinthians 5:3-5, which speaks of the discipline Paul urged the Corinthian church to administer to one who had sinned grievously and openly.

"These men had departed from the faith of the gospel, and furthermore had done despite to the Spirit of grace by attributing to the power of Satan the wonderful revelations made to Paul. Having rejected the truth, they were filled with hatred against it, and sought to destroy its faithful advocate."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 912.

Under what circumstances is it necessary for the church to disfellowship members? In what spirit should such action be taken?

FURTHER STUDY: Read Paul's defense before Agrippa—Acts 26. Read also "From Persecutor to Disciple," *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 112-122.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Since Paul was ignorant of the truth about Christ when he was persecuting Christians, was it fair for him to brand himself later as the "chief" of sinners? Are not those who are knowingly sinning more guilty?
2. Do you ever view yourself as the chief of sinners? Is your evaluation accurate? Do you think it good or bad to sit in judgment on yourself?

SUMMARY: In our study this week Paul drew aside the curtain, baring his soul so that we might understand and appreciate the power of the gospel, which can change the most unpromising life. Paul expressed sincere gratitude for the forgiveness, mercy, and patience of Christ. The assurance and reality of personal salvation gave Paul boldness in committing to Timothy a charge to uphold the faith and be a faithful soldier for Christ.



Building churches for the Lord in the South Pacific Division. Can you help them with an offering from the heart on September 25th?

Prayer, Modesty, and Relationships



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 1 Timothy 2

MEMORY TEXT: "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1 Timothy 2:8).

KEY THOUGHT. Prayer, modesty, and entire submission to Christ's will are essential aspects of the life of faith.

PRAYER HEATS THE CHURCH. Charles H. Spurgeon, the famous nineteenth-century English preacher, held multitudes spellbound in the Metropolitan Tabernacle. On one occasion he was showing some visitors through the Tabernacle. After they had seen the main auditorium, he said, "Come, and I'll show you the heating apparatus." To their surprise he took them to the room where four hundred people were taking part in a prayer meeting.

Christ mourns over the lukewarm condition of His last-day church. "I know your works," He says, "you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot!" (Rev. 3:15, RSV). The cure for this spiritual malady is for each local church to have the kind of heating apparatus enjoyed by the Metropolitan Tabernacle. United prayer, engaged in on a regular basis, will revitalize the spiritual life of the church. Coldness or lukewarmness to one another will be replaced by mutual respect and loving Christian relationships. Formalism, fashion, and narrow professionalism will succumb to the inspiring warmth of the Holy Spirit and the renewing love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE INTERCESSORY MINISTRY OF PRAYER IN THE CHURCH (1 Tim. 2:1, 2).

What kind of prayer did Paul urge Timothy to promote in the Ephesian church? Why? 1 Tim. 2:1, 2 (compare 1 Peter 2:17; Rom. 13:1)

What good is accomplished by praying for those whose lives we have no opportunity to influence? Of what benefit is it for humble, uninfluential Christians to pray for "kings and all those in authority" (1 Tim. 2:2, NIV)? Certainly our prayers influence our own lives. The Lord would have us pray for others because He wants our hearts to be right with Him. Having a right attitude toward those in authority is a byproduct of being right with God.

But do we pray for others primarily to gain blessings for ourselves? Are kings and those in authority benefited by our prayers? Isn't the Lord working for them before we pray? Then why are we instructed to pray for them? Do our prayers change God? Indeed no! (See Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8.)

God has chosen to have His believing people as partners in the plan of redemption. Even though the Holy Spirit works for the lost who have no exposure to Christian teachers (Rom. 2:11-16), Jesus commands us to go into all the world and preach the gospel (Matt. 28:19, 20). Our efforts for unbelievers, blessed by heaven, result in the salvation of many who would otherwise be lost. Likewise, our prayers do make a difference! Missionaries are blessed, rulers are convicted and led, and the lost are drawn to Christ because we pray for them. (See *The Great Controversy*, p. 525.)

Study the following Bible examples of God's intervention that reversed the decrees of rulers?

Dan. 2:17-23, 46-48 _____

Dan. 3:20, 24, 25 _____

Dan. 10:2, 13, 14 _____

Acts 12:1-14 _____

If God does not intervene to prevent injustice, is that evidence that our prayers for rulers have not been answered?

A RANSOM FOR ALL (1 Tim. 2:3-7).

What special reason does Paul give for praying for everyone? 1 Tim. 2:3, 4.

"All men" (verse 4) includes nonbelievers. We are to pray not only for those who are favorably disposed toward us or the church, but also for our enemies.

Gnostic teachers in the second-century church taught ideas that, in a less developed form, were prevalent in the first-century church. According to this teaching, not all human beings have a special divine spark of life, while others are not capable of enjoying the fullness of salvation. If this were one of the false teachings in the Ephesian church, Paul's counsel to Timothy effectively answered it. Because all have the same offer of salvation, we are to pray for all. (See *Testimonies*, vol. 7, pp. 14, 15.) All will be convicted of God's love and their need of union with Him. (Compare John 12:32; 16:8-11.)

Identify the two major aspects of Christ's work for all humanity that Paul emphasizes. 1 Tim. 2:5, 6.

The Gnostic heresy that began in the first century taught that there were many intermediaries between God and man. Paul emphasized that there is only one Mediator—the One who died for the sins of all. Christ is our "advocate with the Father" because "he is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1, 2, RSV).

The significance of Paul's message is timeless. To this day there are many Christians who believe in the intercession of the "saints"—immortal souls in heaven. Paul taught that only God is immortal (1 Tim. 6:16) and that only Christ mediates the merits He earned at Calvary.

Others today teach that only those whom God decreed would be saved are capable of receiving Christ's saving grace. The Bible answer is that, because Christ bore the sin of all, He wants "all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4, NIV). And they may be saved, if they will, for Jesus tasted "death for every man" (Heb. 2:9).

Relate Paul's teaching to that of Jesus (see Matt. 5:43-48). What blessings have you experienced by following this counsel?

UNITY IN PRAYER (1 Tim. 2:8).

What is to be the state of mind and heart of men who join in prayer? 1 Tim. 2:8.

Paul has just stated that the believers are to pray for "all men" (verse 1). Obviously this includes women. The "all men" for whom we are to pray are those whom the Lord wishes to be saved (verse 4). His concern is to save all humanity without distinction of gender. But in verse 8 Paul gives specific counsel to men, followed in verses 9-11 by specific counsel to women. The Greek word used for "men" in verse 8 may mean men in contrast to women.

Verse 8 may be translated: "So I want the men to pray in every place, as they hold up holy hands, without anger and argument." It is often assumed that "in every place" means in every place of public worship. Some interpreters go a step farther, arguing that only men should lead in prayer in the worship service. The text does not make either of these statements. It simply indicates that wherever men are praying in the presence of others they are to adopt certain attitudes.

The phrase "without anger or disputing" (NIV) implies that others are present. Perhaps among the Ephesian Christians there was some dispute over the role of men as spiritual leaders, whether in the home or in the church. Possibly this is why they were moved to anger and disputing at a time when they were supposed to be leading in prayer.

What is the significance of the phrase "lifting up holy hands" (1 Tim. 2:8)?

Hands are never holy apart from the condition of the heart. And holiness of heart is an essential characteristic of the Christian who is enjoying present salvation in Christ. (See 1 Peter 1:2; Heb. 12:14.) Paul is not saying that literal raising of the hands is an essential feature of prayer. The major focus is on the spiritual condition of the worshiper's heart.

Paul's counsel clearly seems to be that whenever men are leading in prayer, they are to be fully surrendered in heart to God and are not to enter into any dispute as to their role as spiritual leaders.

EXTRAVAGANT DRESS DEMEANS WORSHIP (1 Tim. 2:9, 10).

**What were to be the attitudes and demeanor of women?
1 Tim. 2:9.**

Verses 1-7 emphasize the need for believers to pray for all classes of humanity in view of Christ's death for all and His heavenly mediation for those who respond to His love. Verse 8 instructs men to engage in prayer in a spirit of holiness "without anger or quarreling" (RSV). Evidently the prayer practices of the Ephesian church had been a subject of controversy. The first word of verse 9 is the Greek word that means "in the same way," "similarly," "likewise." "In the same way" women were to pray, but dressed in an appropriate manner.

The passage suggests that some women were entering into the spiritual activities of the church with wrong attitudes and dressed inappropriately. Certain gnostic teachers promoted the idea that some women had superior spiritual powers and were capable of imparting special divine knowledge to the church. Imagine how that attitude could affect the prayer life and other spiritual activities of the church!

**How are Christian women to dress? Why? 1 Timothy 2:9, 10
(compare 1 Peter 3:1-4).**

Randolph O. Yeager paraphrases verse 9: "I want women to dress themselves in modest apparel, with modesty and good taste; not with artistically fashioned coiffures and gold or pearls or expensive clothing."—*The Renaissance New Testament* (Gretna, La.: Pelican, 1985), vol. 15, p. 361.

"The Bible teaches modesty in dress. 'In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel.' 1 Timothy 2:9. This forbids display in dress, gaudy colors, profuse ornamentation. Any device designed to attract attention to the wearer, or to excite admiration, is excluded from the modest apparel which God's word enjoins."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 287.

Paul is not identifying a shabby appearance with holiness. Nor is he ruling out attractive clothing. Just as 1 Timothy 2:8 may apply equally to women who lead in prayer, so verse 9 applies equally to men in those situations in which they approach the Lord dressed inappropriately.

INSPIRED COUNSEL FOR A SPECIFIC PROBLEM (1 Tim. 2:11, 12).

What attitude toward learning did Paul instruct the Christian women in Ephesus to adopt? 1 Tim. 2:11.

The Greek word translated "silence" means "in a quiet demeanor." The same word is used in verse 2. Believers were to pray that they would be permitted to "live peaceful and quiet lives" (NIV). That did not mean that they were to live in silence. The implication is that some women in Ephesus were disturbing the worship services by their noisy, perhaps even disruptive, attitude.

The phrase "with all subjection" (verse 11) may be better rendered "with all submissiveness" (RSV). Paul's use of the word *all* ("in every conceivable way") included the conduct of the younger widows who were "going about from house to house [house-churches] . . . saying things they ought not to" (5:13, NIV).

What reasons did Paul give for opposing the dominant role being assumed by some women in the Ephesian church? Verses 12-15.

"I suffer not" (verse 12), is better translated, "I am not allowing." This implies that Paul's instruction is designed to meet the specific situation in the church of Ephesus. Godly women in history have taught and some have exercised leadership positions given them by God. For example, Deborah (Judges 4:4), Huldah (2 Chron. 34:22), the daughters of Philip the evangelist (Acts 21:9), and Priscilla (Acts 18:26; Rom. 16:3).

But misguided, ill-informed women in Ephesus were assuming an authoritarian teaching role. The Greek verb translated in the KJV "to usurp authority over" may refer to an improper exercise of authority, "to domineer" (Arndt and Gingrich). Such women were "to be in silence" ["quietness," "rest"; the same Greek word translated "peaceable" in verse 2 and "silence" ("quietness," NIV) in verse 11]. They were not prohibited from making a contribution, but were to be teachable and cooperative.

It seems that the specific problem did not involve the question of whether women generally have a right to teach and exercise legitimate leadership roles in the church, but that certain contentious women were usurping authority over men.

FURTHER STUDY: In relation to 1 Timothy 2:13-15 read *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 46, 55-59; *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 484; *The Adventist Home*, pp. 99, 100, 211, 212, 215, 231.

How do you interpret 1 Timothy 2:13-15? Consider the following suggestions: These verses are obviously designed to support Paul's counsel that the contentious women in Ephesus should not usurp authority. His first argument is that "Adam was formed first, then Eve" (verse 13, NIV). Women in the Ephesian church should forsake their divisive attitudes because Eve was not created with authority over Adam. Moreover, the manner in which she was created demonstrated her equality with Adam, not her superiority.

"Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 46.

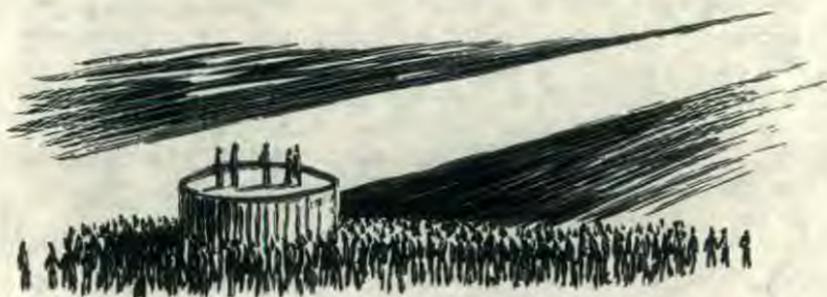
Paul's second argument (verse 14) emphasizes that Eve, not Adam, was the one deceived. Paul is not imputing degrees of guilt; he is simply pointing out the danger of men and women's exercising total independence from each other. Eve was deceived when she felt "she had sufficient wisdom and strength to discern evil and to withstand it."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 54. If she had remained close to her companion, she would not have been so vulnerable. Some women in Ephesus were making an even greater mistake—assuming their spiritual superiority and independence.

"But after Eve's sin, as she was first in the transgression, the Lord told her that Adam should rule over her [Gen. 3:16]. She was to be in subjection to her husband, and this was a part of the curse."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 484.

Scripture teaches that Christ redeems human relationships from the curse of sin. Even though "the husband and father is the head of the household," "woman should fill the position which God originally designed for her, as her husband's equal." She should "stand by his side, she faithful at her post of duty and he at his."—*The Adventist Home*, pp. 211, 231. Moreover, even though the curse continues to affect the childbearing of women, the gift of salvation can be theirs on the same grounds that it is available to all humanity (1 Timothy 2:15).

SUMMARY: Christ wishes us to pray for all humanity because He died for all. Although God has given men and women some distinct roles, the gospel recognizes no superiority of one over another.

The Leaders of the Church



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 1 Timothy 3.

MEMORY TEXT: "I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:14, 15, RSV).

KEY THOUGHT: Leaders of the church must be spiritually and ethically above reproach because the church is the "household of God," "the pillar and bulwark of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15, RSV).

THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH. As Paul went from city to city he ordained elders in every church (Acts 14:23). Who were these elders? What were their qualifications and responsibilities? In 1 Timothy 3 the term *bishop* or *overseer* is used. The New Testament uses this term interchangeably with the word *elder*. In the first century, the bishop, or elder, was a minister or pastor of the church. He was not an ecclesiastical ruler as were later bishops of the church.

Deacons are also discussed in this passage. They were church helpers, appointed to enable the pastors to concentrate on gospel proclamation. (See Acts 6:1-6.)

The first-century qualifications for church leadership described by Paul are still applicable today.

THE CHALLENGE OF MINISTRY (1 Tim. 3:1).

Note the passages that use the terms *bishop* (overseer) and *elder* interchangeably:

Elders

Acts 2:17
1 Tim. 5:17, 19
Titus 1:5

Bishops(Overseers)

Acts 20:28
1 Tim. 3:2
Titus 1:7

In Paul's day, bishops/elders were ordained ministers who had spiritual oversight of the congregations. In later centuries bishops became the overseers of the elders. The chairman of the board of elders came to exercise increasingly greater authority until he was virtually an ecclesiastical ruler. There is no biblical basis for this kind of church rulership. (See Mark 10:42-45.)

In what way did Paul express approval for an individual desiring to be a spiritual leader in the church? 1 Tim. 3:1.

"Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task" (1 Tim. 3:1, NIV). When the desire to enter the gospel ministry results from the call of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is a noble ambition. The ministry is more than a profession; it is a divine calling.

"The apostles, who had power over unclean spirits and could heal the sick, dared not with merely their wisdom set one apart for the holy work of being mouthpiece for God. They waited unmistakable evidence of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. . . .

"God has repeatedly shown that persons should not be encouraged into the field without unmistakable evidence that He has called them. The Lord will not entrust the burden for His flock to unqualified individuals. Those whom God calls must be men of deep experience, tried and proved, men of sound judgment, men who will dare to reprove sin in the spirit of meekness, men who understand how to feed the flock."—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 208, 209.

Can you give Bible examples of men who wanted to be ministers and whom Christ subsequently called? Are there examples of those who wished to minister but were not called?

QUALIFICATIONS FOR BISHOPS, OR ELDERS (1 Tim. 3:1-7; compare Titus 1:6-9).

List the positive qualifications that ordained ministers must possess. 1 Tim. 3:1-7 (compare Titus 1:6-9; Acts 20:28, 35; 1 Peter 5:1-3).

One of the important qualifications of eldership is that the individual is to be "blameless" (1 Tim. 3:2), or "irreproachable." The list of moral prerequisites that follow require that the elder, both in private and public life, must bring no reproach upon the church of Christ, which He purchased with His own precious blood. (See Eph. 5:25-27.)

What did Paul mean by the statement "the husband of one wife"? 1 Tim. 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6.

This phrase has been explained in various ways: (1) All ministers should be married; (2) polygamy would disqualify a person as an elder; (3) a divorced person could not serve as an elder; (4) elders, if widowed, could not remarry.

It would be difficult to accept the first explanation, because Paul himself was unmarried (1 Cor. 7:8, 9). Probably Timothy was also unmarried. On the second point Gordon D. Fee comments: "Polygamy was such a rare feature of pagan society that such a prohibition would function as a near irrelevancy. Moreover, it would not seem to fit the identical phrase used of the widows in [1 Tim.] 5:9."—*1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, p. 43.

On the third point, there is no scriptural evidence that the innocent party to a divorce cannot be a minister. (See Matt. 5:31, 32.) On the fourth point, remarriage after the death of one's partner is acceptable to God (Rom. 7:1, 2) and recommended to young widows (1 Tim. 5:14).

"Accordingly, the meaning of our present passage (1 Tim. 3:2) is simply this, that an overseer or elder [and a deacon] must be a man of unquestioned morality, one who is entirely true and faithful to his one and only wife; one who, being married, does not in pagan fashion enter into an immoral relationship with another woman."—William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*, p. 121.

BISHOPS AND DEACONS MUST BE TEMPERATE (1 Tim. 3:2, 3, 8).

What warnings did Paul give bishops and deacons on the danger of alcoholic beverages? 1 Tim. 3:2, 3, 8. Why did he urge Timothy to take "a little wine" (1 Tim. 5:23)?

The word "sober" (1 Tim. 3:2) translates the Greek word *nephalios*. The corresponding verb is *nepho*. In his book *Wine in the Bible* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Biblical Perspectives, 1989) Samuele Bacchiocchi gives convincing evidence that these words refer to total abstinence from wine. "There is noteworthy unanimity among Greek lexicons on the primary meaning of this verb. Liddell and Scott give as the first meaning of *nepho*, 'to be sober, drink no wine.' In his *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Lampe renders it, 'be temperate, drink no wine.' . . . Lampe gives as the first meaning of *nephalios*, 'without wine, temperate.'"—Pages 198, 199. Bacchiocchi cites a number of other Greek dictionaries that give the same or similar meanings: "not having drunk," "he who abstains from wine," "one who does not drink wine."

The phrase "not given to wine" (1 Tim. 3:3), "no drunkard" (RSV), translates the Greek words, *me paroinon*. Bacchiocchi establishes that this means totally abstinent. "What Paul is saying is that a bishop must be not only abstinent, but must also avoid places where wine was consumed."—*Wine in the Bible*, p. 207.

The phrase, "not given to much wine," does not modify the counsel to bishops (1 Tim. 3:2, 3) or the command to total abstinence given elsewhere in Scripture. (See Lev. 10:8-10; Prov. 20:1; 23:31, 32.) What is forbidden in *much* is not necessarily permissible in *little*. (See *Wine in the Bible*, pp. 248, 249.)

Paul urged Timothy to use a little wine because of his illnesses (1 Tim. 5:23). Bacchiocchi explains convincingly (pp. 242-255) that: (1) Paul was not urging Timothy to drink wine for pleasure, but as a medicine. (2) The verse is more correctly translated: "No longer drink water alone, but use *with a little wine for the stomach*, because of your frequent infirmities." (3) There is evidence that in the ancient world unfermented wine ("sweet wine") was used for medicinal purposes. "Paul . . . meant the unfermented juice of the grape. He did not advise Timothy to take what the Lord had prohibited."—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times* (September 6, 1899), p. 6. (4) The counsel implies that Timothy was a total abstainer.

SPIRITUAL LEADERS AT HOME (1 Tim. 3:4, 5, 12, 13).

What reason does Paul give that elders and deacons should have well-ordered homes? 1 Tim. 3:4, 5, 12, 13.

The home life of elders, deacons, and deaconesses is an indicator of their eligibility for spiritual leadership in the church. Individuals appointed to leadership office in the church are to be carefully screened and tested. (See 1 Tim. 3:7, 10; 5:22.) Unqualified, unworthy individuals create problems within the church and embarrassment in the church's relationships with the outside world. As an additional precaution, elders are to be chosen from the ranks of settled, mature Christians (1 Tim. 3:6).

Paul emphasizes two responsibilities of spiritual leaders:

1. They are to manage, direct, and show genuine concern for the affairs of their homes. "There is need of far more love and courtesy in our families than is now revealed. When our ministering brethren shall drink in the spirit of Christ daily, they will be truly courteous, and will not consider it weakness to be tenderhearted and pitiful, for this is one of the principles of the gospel of Christ."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 156.
2. With love and firmness they are to train their children in the way of the Lord. (See *The Adventist Home*, p. 353.)

What should be the characteristics of the church shepherd both at home and in the church? 1 Peter 5:2, 3; Gen. 18:18, 19.

Eli failed to train his children in the way of the Lord. (See 1 Samuel 2:12-17, 22-25, 27-34.) Many parents see discipline as incompatible with love. The resulting permissiveness fosters a sad harvest of broken homes, rebellion, delinquency, and crime. Wise and effective church leaders keep their families secure in the knowledge and practice of Christian virtues, not by harsh, overbearing domination, but with the discipline of love and the power of Christlike example.

Consider areas in which your role in the home could be improved by more diligent application of divinely revealed instruction.

QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS (1 Tim. 3:8-13).

The office of deacon is one of practical importance. While the bishop/elder is the spiritual leader and administrator of the church, the deacon is the assistant whose special mission is to ensure that the physical needs of the church and its members are met.

According to William Barclay, the Christian church inherited a worthy concept of service and caring from the Jewish synagogue, which preceded it. (1) Involved in the life of the synagogue, every Friday two officially appointed collectors visited each home and received donations in cash and goods for the poor and needy. (2) The poor and needy were supplied with provisions to last a week. (3) The Christian church inherited this caring concept; undoubtedly, deacons were given this responsibility. (See William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*.)

When were deacons first appointed, and what were the circumstances? Acts 6:1-6. List the criteria used to determine their eligibility.

Compare the qualifications of deacons listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 with the qualifications for elders in verses 2-7. What similarities and differences do you see?

No specific mention is made in 1 Timothy or Titus of deaconesses, but the New Testament church did appoint women to this office. (See Rom. 16:1; the word translated "servant" means "deaconess," RSV.) Because of the context of 1 Timothy 3:11, it is likely that the "women" addressed there are deaconesses. Like the men (deacons), they are to be "serious, no slanderers, but temperate [free from the use of alcohol], faithful in all things" (RSV).

The New Testament mentions caring Christian women who gave of their time and talents in loving, unselfish service to the church. Since the Scriptures recognize that in Christ there is neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek (Gal. 3:28), the criteria given to Timothy are applicable to both men and women.

Since church leaders are examples to members, their spiritual qualities should be shared by all. As you examine your character using Paul's list, what do you find?

FURTHER STUDY: Study 1 Timothy 3:14-16. Read "The Seven Deacons" in *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 87-96.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. As a result of your study of 1 Timothy 3:14-16, discuss the following questions:
 - a. What is the significance of Paul's definition of the church? Explain how the church is "the pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15, NIV). Upon whom is the church built? (See Matt 16:16-18; Eph. 2:20.) What do you see as your part in the church that God designed to support and maintain truth? (See 1 Peter 2:4, 5.)
 - b. Why is "godliness" referred to as a "mystery" (1 Tim. 3:16)? In context, what is included in the term "godliness"? Why is the gospel a mystery to nonbelievers but truth made plain to believers? (Compare 1 Tim. 3:9; Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 2:7-10; Eph. 1:9; Col 1:27.)
 - c. How was God "manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16)? (See John 1:1-3, 14; Rom. 1:3; 8:3.)
 - d. In what sense was Christ "justified in the Spirit" (1 Tim. 3:16)? (See 1 John 2:1; Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14.) Was Christ declared righteous by the Holy Spirit? Was Christ fully righteous? How would you define the word *justified* (1 Tim. 3:16)?
2. From the Bible, how would you defend the Adventist position regarding total abstinence from alcohol?
3. What application to every Christian home can you make from Paul's counsel to elders and deacons regarding marriage and family?
4. Do you see elders and deacons fulfilling biblical roles today? What changes, if any, should be made?

SUMMARY: First Timothy 3 contains clear and comprehensive scriptural criteria for those holding sacred office in the church. Qualifications for bishops (elders) and deacons are specified, including vital aspects of personal, family, and community life. The chapter closes with a hymn, extolling the incarnation and ministry of Christ.

Godly Ministers and Members



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 1 Timothy 4.

MEMORY TEXT: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

KEY THOUGHT: In view of developing apostasy and the increasing influence of false teachings, the only safeguard for pastor and people is total reliance upon Christ and His Word, cherishing the godliness He imparts.

THE NEED FOR SPIRITUAL STABILITY IN TIMES OF APOSTASY. The New Testament record of the early church bears testimony to: (1) The obstacles and opposition that Christianity encountered as it spread among Jews and Gentiles; (2) the victorious conquests for Christ in the pagan world; (3) the threat to the church posed by heathen custom, worship, and practice; (4) divine revelation of future opposing forces in the political and religious worlds.

Paul had warned the Ephesian elders that false teachers would invade the church. (See Acts 20:28-31.) In 1 Timothy 4 Paul warns of developing apostasy and pleads for devotion to Christ and the teachings of His Word. In the following centuries apostasy, heresy, and persecution threatened to destroy the Christian church.

PAUL FORETELLS A DEPARTURE FROM THE FAITH
(1 Tim. 4:1).

Paul assures us that the prediction about apostasy is not the result of personal conjecture. The revelation is inspired by the Holy Spirit. (See 2 Peter 1:20, 21.)

How serious would be future departures from the true faith? 1 Tim. 4:1.

Paul warned that departures from the true faith would continue and grow until the ultimate apostasy. Toward the end of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, the medieval apostasy will be repeated, culminating in Satan's open challenge to the position and authority of God. (See 2 Thess. 2:3, 4, 8-10.) The final act of deception will be Satan's impersonation of Christ.

"Fearful sights of a supernatural character will soon be revealed in the heavens, in token of the power of miracle-working demons. The spirits of devils will go forth to the kings of the earth and to the whole world, to fasten them in deception, and urge them on to unite with Satan in his last struggle against the government of heaven. By these agencies, rulers and subjects will be alike deceived. Persons will arise pretending to be Christ Himself, and claiming the title and worship which belong to the world's Redeemer. They will perform wonderful miracles of healing and will profess to have revelations from heaven contradicting the testimony of the Scriptures."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 624.

What is the source of opposition to Christ and His truth? How can we resist it? Eph. 6:11-13.

"As we near the end of time, falsehood will be so mingled with truth, that only those who have the guidance of the Holy Spirit will be able to distinguish truth from error. . . . Those who are guided by the Word of the Lord will discern with certainty between falsehood and truth, between sin and righteousness.—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 907.

Are you so committed to Christ and grounded in His Word that subtle falsehoods coming into the church will not sway you? What can you do this week to be sure?

DEMONS AND THEIR DOCTRINES (1 Tim. 4:1-4).

How will it come about that members of Christ's church will advocate falsehood and a counterfeit way of life? 1 Tim. 4:1, 2.

Those who depart from the faith will introduce "doctrines of devils" (1 Tim. 4:1). They will preach one thing but practice another. Seared consciences are consciences deadened through repeated and willful neglect and violation of truth. An apostate from the faith is both morally and doctrinally wrong. The personal life may be out of step with Christ before the beliefs are changed. False teachings may be accepted to justify a life of sin.

What departures from Christian lifestyle would be advocated by the specific false teachers to whom Paul was referring? 1 Tim. 4:3, 4.

These false teachers would combine Judeo-Christian teaching with Eastern asceticism by (1) forbidding marriage and (2) advocating abstinence from certain foods. Some gnostics advocated that, because matter is evil, food and marriage, concerned with the physical aspects of life, are to be avoided and suppressed. Later monasticism was based on similar notions. Elsewhere Paul exalts marriage as a God-given institution. (See 1 Cor. 7:1-4; Heb. 13:4.) Did the death of Christ render clean and permissible what had once been unclean? (See Leviticus 11.)

"Paul here refers to ascetic influences and tendencies that permeated the church. For ceremonial, ritualistic reasons these ascetics considered the total prohibition of certain foods [*bromaton*, "foods," translated "meats" in the KJV] to be spiritually desirable. The prohibition of certain foods on particular religious days may also be included in the apostle's warning."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 303.

Paul is *not* saying that every created thing is good for food; *but that everything God intends us to use as food is good*. The basic principle to guide us is stated in 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20.

What does diet have to do with spiritual life? How can we be sure that our diet is in line with God's will?

GODLY MINISTER AND PEOPLE (1 Tim. 4:6, 7).

What effect would teaching the truth in regard to marriage and eating have on Timothy's ministry? 1 Tim. 4:6.

By effectively answering the doctrinal lies of these hypocrites, Timothy would be "nourished" himself. Man does not "live by bread alone" (Matt. 4:4), but by God's eternally true words of faith and doctrine (1 Tim. 4:6).

How was Timothy to relate to unscriptural and speculative ideas? 1 Tim. 4:7.

"The best defense of Christian doctrine is not found in a continued attack upon the current 'fables,' but rather in a consistent Christian life. . . . In addition, the clear, positive presentation of truth which undergirds this genuine Christian experience will be more effective than quibbling over fanciful notions."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 305.

"Ministers of God should be of good repute, capable of discreetly managing an interest after they have aroused it. We stand in great need of competent men who will bring honor instead of disgrace upon the cause which they represent. Ministers should be examined especially to see if they have an intelligent understanding of the truth for this time, so that they can give a connected discourse upon the prophecies or upon practical subjects. If they cannot clearly present Bible subjects they need to be hearers and learners still. They should earnestly and prayerfully search the Scriptures, and become conversant with them, in order to be teachers of Bible truth to others. All these things should be carefully and prayerfully considered before men are hurried into the field of labor."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 407.

How is godliness attained? 1 Tim. 4:7; 6:3, 11.

We seek godliness when we seek Christ and prayerfully endeavor to imbibe His Word. Godliness is piety, genuine devotion to Christ manifested in performance of His will.

Ask yourself, are there areas in my life in which I avoid truth by clinging to pet ideas and practices? How can true godliness become my experience?

SPIRITUAL EXERCISE IS SUPERIOR TO PHYSICAL
(1 Tim. 4:8-11).

What lesson does Paul teach regarding bodily exercise in relation to spiritual priorities? 1 Tim. 4:8, 9.

William Barclay gives helpful insights into why Paul was moved to place physical exercise in correct perspective:

(1) In the world of his time, particularly in Greece, gymnasiums were notorious for homosexuality. Gymnastics were the major element of the youths' education between ages of 16 and 18. (2) Physical training, although good, was both incomplete and secondary. "Training in godliness develops the whole man in body, mind and spirit, and its results affect not only time, but eternity as well. The Christian is not the athlete of the gymnasium, he is the athlete of God."—William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, p. 97.

Physical training has value if it contributes to spiritual and intellectual growth. The aim of true education is the harmonious development of physical, intellectual, and spiritual powers. Unbalanced emphasis on any one of these powers produces unbalanced character.

"Moral, intellectual, and physical culture should be combined in order to have well-developed, well-behaved men and women."—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 42.

What is the basis of ardent, self-denying service to God?
1 Tim. 4:10.

With the foregoing in mind, the faithful gospel minister labors, or, as the Greek implies, works hard to the point of weariness. He also suffers reproach for Christ. Paul suggests contending with evil forces—which Timothy was obliged to do—in order to ensure growth in godliness and the faithful discharge of ministry.

Trust and confidence in the living God's unfailing salvation for all true believers (verse 10) motivate the courageous, faithful witness for Christ. Although salvation is available to all humanity, only those who believe in the Saviour will experience it. (See John 3:16-18, 36.)

What are some of the practical results when the religious, intellectual, and physical aspects of your life are not in balance?

MATURING IN THE WORD (1 Tim. 4:12-16).

We have come to a most important part of this letter. The admonition contained in this passage has been the benchmark for Christian ministers since Paul wrote these words. (See *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 194, 292, 404.)

Lest Timothy be despised because of his youth, what was he to do? 1 Tim. 4:12.

The elders in the Ephesian church were probably much older than Timothy. The indications are that he was timid and reticent by nature. The challenges facing him could have been frightening were he not confident that God was with him.

Timothy's example would effectively counteract challenges to his credentials. He was to be an example in: (1) *word*, speech, conversation; (2) *conduct*, Greek: "manner of life"; (3) *charity*, love for God and His people; (4) *spirit*, suggesting enthusiasm and power; (5) *faith*: Timothy had grown up in an atmosphere rich in faith (2 Tim. 1:5); (6) *purity*: He was to resist the influence of the moral perversion current in Ephesus. And he was to be chaste in his association with women (1 Tim. 5:2), keeping himself pure in mind, heart, and body.

What positive measures was Timothy to take to enhance his own spirituality and ministry? 1 Tim. 4:13-16.

The underlying purpose of Paul's counsel was that Timothy's spiritual growth should be evident to all (verse 15). His efforts were to be given "to the public reading of scripture, to preaching, to teaching" (verse 13, RSV).

At the same time he was not to forget "the gift you have, which was given you by prophetic utterance when the elders laid their hands upon you" (verse 14, RSV). Perhaps he had been somewhat neglectful in this regard: "Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands" (2 Tim. 1:6). By fulfilling Paul's counsel Timothy and his hearers would enter into the fullness of Christ's saving grace (1 Tim. 4:16).

How does Paul's counsel in 1 Timothy 4:12-16 apply to the church member who holds no office in the church?

FURTHER STUDY: Read from *Gospel Workers*, "The Minister's Responsibility," pp. 30-35 and "The Needed Preparation," pp. 63-66.

"There are many youth who move from impulse rather than from judgment. But Timothy inquired at every step, 'Is this the way of the Lord?' He had no specially brilliant talents, but he consecrated all his abilities to the service of God, and this made his work valuable. The Lord found in him a mind that He could mold and fashion for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. God will use the youth today as He used Timothy, if they will submit to His guidance."—Ellen G. White *Comments, SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 915.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What false doctrines in circulation today do you find especially threatening to the heart of the Advent message?
2. Are there Bible principles to guide us in relating to those in the church who we are convinced are teaching error? Explain.
3. Does healthful living have anything to do with reception of the end-time seal of God?
4. What is doctrine? Why is "good doctrine" so important? Is it possible to be truly godly in Christ Jesus without attention to doctrine?
5. How should older members of the church relate to young, inexperienced pastors? What kinds of attitude should they avoid?

SUMMARY: Apostasy from the pure faith of the gospel was an ever-present threat to the early Christian church. Only as converts surrender their former misguided and erroneous beliefs and accept the truths of God's Word are they safe from the deceptive insinuations of the evil one. Paul warned Timothy of departures from the truth, which would be hazardous to the church. Sound doctrine, an exemplary life, and diligent pursuit of scriptural knowledge are all needed today.

The Elderly and Widows of the Church



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 1 Timothy 5:1-16.

MEMORY TEXT: "If any one does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his own family, he has disowned the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8, RSV).

KEY THOUGHT: Loved ones and the church are called to provide for aged and widowed members. Widows are encouraged to contribute to the work of the church.

A LIGHT TO GUIDE THE LOST. The story is told of an elderly Christian widow who lived in a lonely house on a cliff overlooking the sea. Often she saw the debris from wrecked fishing boats that had washed up on the shore. Sometimes she heard the despairing cries of drowning seamen.

One stormy night an idea suddenly came to her. She could place a lamp in her front window to warn seamen of the dangerous coast. Later she was told of sailors who were saved from shipwreck because they had seen her light. Over a period of years many fishermen who had been saved from peril thanked her for her thoughtfulness.

Widows and widowers in the church today, single parents, divorcees, and those who have never been married can provide lamps to guide the unwary through the shoals of defeat, sorrow, and discouragement. There is a work for all to do in the service of the Master.

THE YOUTHFUL PASTOR AND SENIOR CITIZENS (1 Tim. 5:1, 2).

How was Timothy to show respect for the older church members who might need reprimand? In what spirit was he to counsel and rebuke younger men? 1 Tim. 5:1 (compare Gal. 6:1).

It is seldom easy to reprimand. Because of the risks involved, some persons neglect this solemn responsibility. Such neglect could mean the eternal loss of a soul who might have been rescued from a wrong course. A rebuke, given unwisely and injudiciously, may result in anger, rejection, or resentment. Timothy was bidden to "entreat" the older men as a son would appeal to an erring father. He was to treat the young men as brothers, part of his own family.

"Old age does not automatically cancel the need for correction, but if it is the young man's duty to reprove, the spirit of sincere respect and humility must prevail. . . . The younger members of the church must sense his [the young leader's] fellowship, not his superiority."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 309.

"All who would advocate the principles of truth need to receive the heavenly oil of love. Under all circumstances reproof should be spoken in love. Then our words will reform but not exasperate. Christ by His Holy Spirit will supply the force and the power. This is His work."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 337.

If you have the Spirit of Prophecy books available, read the following passages concerning reproof:

Testimonies vol. 3, p. 359: Reproof may be an unpleasant duty but God blesses those who faithfully perform such duty.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 337: Speak in love.

Testimonies, vol. 1, p. 164: Reproof devoid of a spirit of love is wrong.

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, p. 129: No one can be reclaimed by an attitude of censure and reproach.

Testimonies, vol. 2, p. 53: The spirit in which reproof is given largely determines the outcome.

Testimonies, vol. 3, p. 93: Pitying tenderness should be shown. There is no place for severity and harshness.

In your own experience, under what circumstances have you resented reproof? Would you have accepted the same counsel if it had been given in a different spirit?

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN THE CHURCH.

In what different ways was Timothy to relate to younger and older women in the church? 1 Tim. 5:2. What enduring command was given to Israel regarding treatment of fathers and mothers? Ex. 20:12.

List ways in which younger persons can show respect, deference, and assistance to those older in years:

Timothy was to regard the younger women in the church as sisters. Christian love molded by genuine respect results in purity of thought, word, and action. By relating to older women as mothers, and to the younger women as sisters, Timothy would be preserving the bounds of Christian respectability. Nothing so detracts from the sacredness and effectiveness of the gospel ministry as church leaders succumbing to moral entrapment planned by the enemy of souls. The standard of relationship and conduct is "with all purity" (1 Tim. 5:2). Paul's counsel to the Philippians applies to relationships between persons of the opposite gender in the church. (See Phil. 4:8.)

Read the experience of Joseph when he was assailed by temptation to commit immorality. What was his defense? Gen. 39:7-12. In what ways was Timothy, as a young minister, to exemplify the high moral standards of the gospel ministry? 1 Tim. 4:12 (compare 5:22, last part).

"When one who claims to be teaching the truth is inclined to be much in the company of young or even married women, when he familiarly lays his hand upon their person, or is often found conversing with them in a familiar manner, be afraid of him; the pure principles of truth are not wrought in his soul. Such are not workers with Jesus; they are not in Christ, and Christ is not abiding in them. They need a thorough conversion before God can accept their labors."—*Evangelism*, p. 680.

WIDOWS IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY (1 Tim. 5:4).

In an age when some responsibility for the aged, frail, and destitute is often taken by state and civic institutions, we need to remind ourselves of the Christian's role outlined in the New Testament. We applaud government aid to the disadvantaged, but we recognize our Christian duty.

Elderly widows form a significant part of many congregations today. There are obvious reasons for this:

1. Women tend to live longer than men.
2. In some areas of the world women comprise the greater part of church membership.
3. Because of their sense of community caring, women rally to support the welfare ministries of the church.
4. Some cultural environments make it difficult for elderly women, especially widows, to support themselves.

What permanent plan did the church implement to care adequately for widows? Acts 6:1-6.

"Since Palestinian Jews were in the majority in the infant church, the needy among the Hellenists might without any ill intent have been left unassisted, because of differences in language and customs."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 188.

Summarize briefly the scriptural counsel concerning care for widows:

Ex. 22:22 _____

Deut. 14:29 _____

Isa. 1:17 _____

1 Tim. 5:3 _____

James 1:27 _____

Are the members of your church sensitive to the needs of widows, singles, and single parents? In cases of need, what are church members doing to assist them materially? Have you studied ways of involving them in the work of the church, while considering their special gifts and limitations?

CARE OF WIDOWS (1 Tim. 5:4-8).

Who bears primary responsibility to support widows in the church community? 1 Tim. 5:4, 8.

The care of needy widows devolves, first of all, upon the widow's family—her children; failing that, upon her other relatives. This fulfills the scriptural injunction to "honour thy father and thy mother" (Ex. 20:12; see also Matt. 15:4-6). Support of aged, destitute family members is evidence of "piety at home" and of "pure religion" (1 Tim. 5:4; James 1:27). Failure to support needy members of one's family, where this is possible, is to separate oneself from the Lord (1 Tim. 5:8).

If the widow has no relatives to care for her, who is to assist? 1 Tim. 5:3, 5.

The church is to assist "real widows" (verses 3, 5, RSV). These women are "left all alone" (verse 5, RSV). Night and day they plead with God for support and protection. They may have nowhere to turn but to the Lord. The church can help answer their prayers.

"I saw that it is in the providence of God that widows and orphans, the blind, the deaf, the lame, and persons afflicted in a variety of ways, have been placed in close Christian relationship to His church; it is to prove His people and develop their true character. Angels of God are watching to see how we treat these persons who need our sympathy, love, and disinterested benevolence."—*Christian Service*, pp. 191, 192.

What kind of person does not qualify for assistance? 1 Tim. 5:6.

Some persons exploit the generosity of others. We must give assistance discriminatingly. An old proverb states that if you give people a fish, they will still be hungry tomorrow; but if you teach them to fish, they will have food always. (See *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 72, 73.)

The most effective help we can give is to help someone to be self-supporting. (See *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 194, 195.) How would you go about doing that?

WORTHY AND UNWORTHY WIDOWS CONTRASTED
(1 Tim. 5:9-16).

Either by direct statement or implication, the overall passage (1 Tim. 5:1-24) refers to a number of classes of widows: (1) widows young or old who are being supported by their relatives; (2) widows young or old who are to be assisted by the church because they are alone. Either they have no living relatives or their living relatives are unwilling or unable to support them; (3) widows young or old who do not qualify for the assistance of the church. These are self-indulgent widows, those who are gossipers and busybodies, and those who show an immoderate desire to remarry.

What tests did Paul advocate should be used in determining which widows were eligible for ongoing support by the church? 1 Tim. 5:9, 10.

The Greek word translated "taken into the number" (verse 9, KJV) or "be enrolled" (RSV) means literally "to set down a name on a list, register, enroll." This clearly indicates that the church of Ephesus had a list of eligible widows who were receiving assistance from the church. Their qualifications for such assistance must be considered in relation to the cultural setting.

They were to be widows at least 60 years of age, who had been faithful to their husbands, and who had demonstrated by the manner in which they had trained their children and served others that they had a claim on the church's support. This does not imply that the church would entirely ignore the needs of other widows who were alone in the world but who were not yet 60 years of age or who, though over 60, had not lived the kind of exemplary life stipulated. The widows enrolled were a special class who qualified for permanent support because it was clear that they could not support themselves and that they were sterling characters who would use carefully any material assistance given them. Moreover, they were the kind of women who would continue to work for the church.

Younger widows (1 Tim. 5:11-15) were not to be enrolled for permanent support, because, in Ephesus, they tended to manifest an inordinate desire for remarriage and also because they tended to be troublemakers. Paul advised them to remarry. But he did not suggest that, if alone and unsupported, the church should ignore their needs.

FURTHER STUDY: Paul expressed concern and conviction regarding the relationship that should exist between the pastor (Timothy) and the various age groups and social categories within the church. To enhance your understanding of the standards of decorum that are appropriate for Christian leaders, read "The Social Relations" and "In Relation With One Another" in *Gospel Workers*, pp. 129-132, 473-480.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What provisions have you made for the increasing dependency of the aged in your family?
2. Is there a destitute, lonely, unsupported widow/widower in your church? What is your church doing to care for, love, and support this person? What do you think you can do?
3. In modern societies there are many classes of persons who have needs apart from widows. Identify these classes and discuss how the church can assist them.
4. What differences do you detect between the social problems Paul was addressing in the Ephesian church and those current in your setting? What timeless principles emerge from the counsel in 1 Timothy 5:1-16 that guide us in meeting the needs of the widowed, homeless, unsupported people?

SUMMARY: 1 Timothy 5 provided the church and the church leadership with guidelines for interpersonal relationships. Such relationships are to be above reproach, free from moral impurity and the subtleties of Satan.

It is evident that widows comprised a considerable proportion of the church's membership. To assist the church in identifying those who were genuinely in need of church support and to distinguish them from those who should look to their own relatives for sustenance, Paul communicated the criteria to be followed. While times may have changed, there are basic principles that continue to be relevant.

Attitudes Toward Church Leaders



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 1 Tim. 5:17-25.

MEMORY TEXT: "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching" (1 Timothy 5:17, RSV).

KEY THOUGHT: Faithful ministers deserve spiritual and material support; unfaithful ministers should be treated with fairness and Christian charity.

SUPPORT THE PASTOR. "The pastor teaches, though he must solicit his own classes. He heals, though without pills or knife. He is sometimes a lawyer, often a social worker, something of an editor, a bit of a philosopher and entertainer; a salesman, a decorative piece for public functions, and he is supposed to be a scholar. He visits the sick, marries people, buries the dead, labors to console those who sorrow, and to admonish those who sin, and tries to stay sweet when chided for not doing his duty.

"He plans programs, appoints committees when he can get them; spends considerable time in keeping people out of each other's hair; between times he prepares a sermon and preaches it . . . to those who don't happen to have any other engagement. Then on Monday he smiles when some jovial chap roars, 'What a job—a day a week!' "—Selected.

Though slightly exaggerated, this statement emphasizes the important fact that most church members have no conception of the pressures under which their pastors work. In this week's lesson, Paul counsels us as to how our pastors should be treated.

RESPECT AND HONOR FAITHFUL ELDERS (1 Tim. 5:17, 18).

How is the ministry of faithful spiritual leaders to be esteemed? 1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Thess. 5:12, 13.

The spiritual leader who rules well does not exercise dictatorial "lordship" (Luke 22:25, 26). The Greek verb translated "to rule" in 1 Timothy 5:17 means "to manage," "to conduct." Elders who lead well, devoting themselves to the preaching and teaching of "the word and doctrine," are worthy of "double honour." This does not mean that their salaries should be doubled. It means that special respect should be given them because of their faithfulness in proclaiming the gospel.

Of what value is the teaching of the doctrines of God's Word? 1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 3:14-17; Acts 8:35-39.

The word *doctrine* means "teaching." All the teachings of the Bible are profitable for spiritual growth (2 Tim. 3:16). The spiritual leader whose focus is on Christ and the teachings of His Word is worthy of honor (1 Tim. 5:17). But he cannot teach adequately if he omits doctrine.

What scriptural principle did Paul cite in appealing that faithful elders should be remunerated from the gospel harvest? 1 Tim. 5:18; 1 Cor. 9:7-14 (compare Num. 18:21).

The greatest reward of spiritual leaders is the love in the hearts of their people for Christ and for them. Note that in both 1 Timothy 5:18 and 1 Corinthians 9:9 Paul cites Deuteronomy 25:4 as an illustration of his point. In the Epistle to Timothy the application is primarily to the honor given elders. In the letter to the Corinthians the allusion is to tithe, the financial support of the ministry. Pastors cannot survive on honor alone; they and their families must eat! Only as believers return a faithful tithe can the gospel be proclaimed.

What principles are basic to the faithful returning of tithe? Is the manner in which you return your tithe a true application of those principles?

HOW TO DEAL WITH AN ERRING ELDER (1 Tim. 5:19-21).

What precaution was Timothy to exercise when complaints were made about an elder? 1 Tim. 5:19. How did Paul's admonition reflect Jesus' counsel? Matt. 18:15-17.

It is possible for a spiritual leader to be accused by those whose motives are not pure. Some church members who have been rebuked for sin may seek to get even by maligning a pastor or local elder. Others may enjoy the ego status it gives them to pin an indiscretion on a spiritual leader and make it stick. Only the proven evidence of "two or three witnesses" is acceptable. (Compare Deut. 19:15.)

How were public and open sins to be dealt with? What value to the church can this method have? 1 Tim. 5:20.

In context, the counsel applies to the sins of elders. But it may apply also to the public sins of church members. Discipline of church members is dealt with in a number of places in the New Testament. (See Matt. 18:15-18; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; 2 Tim. 2:24-26.)

Too often rumors, lies, and destructive gossip culminate in accusation, hasty judgment, and wounded hearts. Reputations are easily ruined. They are much more difficult to mend and to restore. The unbridled, unsanctified tongue can ignite a fire with a destructive force that can have appalling consequences (James 3:5, 6).

What standard of consistency was Timothy to employ in disciplining church leaders? 1 Tim. 5:21.

The manner in which Timothy dealt with sin among the leaders of the church was visible to the Godhead and to angels. No partiality is to be shown in dealing with sin in the church. How human it is to allow a personal friendship or a negative relationship to influence wrongly the way in which sin must be investigated and handled!

Let us take to heart the scriptural admonition in Ephesians 4:31, 32. Consider the manner in which Jesus dealt with Peter (see Mark 14:66-72; John 21:15-19).

CAUTION REGARDING THE ORDINATION OF ELDERS
(1 Tim. 5:22).

What solemn counsel did Paul give to Timothy to ensure the appropriate choice of church elders? 1 Tim. 5:22.

"The qualifications of the men who are being considered must be fully examined before they can be nominated for office. This is in harmony with what the apostle has been saying in 1 Tim. 3:2, 7, 10. Ordination without preceding thorough investigation would render Timothy co-responsible for the wrongs which such elders might subsequently commit."—William Hendriksen, *I-II Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker 1957), p. 185.

The *Church Manual* (1990, pp. 55, 56) contains valuable counsel regarding the choice and appointment of church officers. It warns that: (1) persons should not be hurried into office; (2) those opposed to unity should not be considered for office; (3) those who refuse to cooperate with others are not safe candidates for church office.

"In many places we meet men who have been hurried into responsible positions as elders of the church when they are not qualified for such a position. They have not proper government over themselves. Their influence is not good. The church is in trouble continually in consequence of the defective character of the leader. Hands have been laid too suddenly upon these men."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 406, 407.

Review the criteria for selecting individuals for church leadership. 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9.

Should Timothy refuse to acknowledge the sins of his elders, what effect would this have upon himself? 1 Tim. 5:22.

By refusing to deal with sin in the church, Timothy would be regarded as a participant. Condoning by silence the wrongdoing of the elders, Timothy would share in their guilt. He would "participate in another man's sins" (verse 22, RSV) in the sense that he would be counted an accomplice. Timothy was to follow divine counsel concerning church leaders.

Why do you think that the church is often reluctant to discipline members who are doing wrong?

ADVICE TO TIMOTHY FOR HIS HEALTH (1 Tim. 5:23).

What counsel did Paul prescribe for Timothy's digestive and other physical infirmities? 1 Tim. 5:23. (Review Lesson 5, Tuesday's section.)

"Amidst the affairs of the Church and the problems of administration, Paul finds time to slip in a little bit of loving advice to Timothy about his health. . . .

"Here we have a great truth which the Christian forgets at his peril, that we dare not neglect the body, for often spiritual dullness and aridity come from the simple fact that the body is tired and neglected. . . . We cannot do Christ's work well unless we are physically fit to do it."—William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, p. 119.

Is Paul giving license for church leaders (and to all Christians) to make use of alcoholic beverages? If Paul had been advocating the use of fermented wine, he would have been giving counsel inconsistent with the rest of Scripture, which warns against intoxicating drink. Physicians often prescribe medicines that have side effects, but their benefits outweigh their dangerous effects.

"Christ Himself had forbidden the use of fermented drink, saying: 'Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations; and that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean' [Lev. 10:9, 10]. . . .

"Fermented liquor confuses the senses and perverts the powers of the being. God is dishonored when men have not sufficient respect for themselves to practise strict temperance. Fermented wine is not a natural production. The Lord never made it, and with its production He has nothing to do. Paul advised Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake and oft infirmities, but he meant the unfermented juice of the grape. He did not advise Timothy to take what the Lord had prohibited. . . .

"Some who claim to be Christians feel at liberty to use intoxicating drink, and in this particular they claim to be in harmony with Christ. But Christ did not set the example they claim to imitate."—Ellen G. White in *The Signs of the Times*, Sept. 6, 1899.

THE LEADER'S MINISTRY AND ETERNAL CONSEQUENCES (1 Tim. 5:24, 25).

How would you interpret verses 24 and 25 of 1 Timothy 5 in relation to each other?

Randolph O. Yeager translates verse 24: "The sins of some men that go ahead of them in judgment are obvious, but in other cases they follow them." He proceeds to interpret the passage: "The point here is that God sees sin with total and therefore inerrant perception while men view it only superficially and partially. Society is aware that some men are sinners, and because they are so open and flagrant, everyone knows ahead of time that the sinner is facing a judgment. Other men, just as sinful as the first group, are nevertheless so artful that only God sees their depravity, but the judgment is as inevitable in the second case as in the first. The fact that some sinners are able to hide their sins from society does not mean that they are able to hide them from the Judge of all the earth (John 5:22).

"It is here that we see the connection between verse 24 and the following verse. Just as hidden present sins are certain to be revealed as such at the judgment, so (verse 25) present hidden good works are certain to be revealed as such at the judgment seat of Christ. Thus it is as idle for sinners to seek to hide their sins from society as it is unnecessary for Christians to advertize and display their good works. The Pharisees made a great display of their righteousness. . . . Conversely Christians who have not bothered to hire a public relations agent, need not fear that their efforts for Christ will be forever unnoticed and [un]rewarded (Heb. 6:10, 11)."—*The Renaissance New Testament*, vol. 15, p. 443.

1 Timothy 5:24 may refer to the pre-advent judgment, in which the book of life is edited. (See Dan. 7:9-14; 12:1; Rev. 3:5.) Ellen White wrote: "If your name is registered in the Lamb's book of life, then all will be well with you. Be ready and anxious to confess your faults and forsake them, that your mistakes and sins may go beforehand to judgment and be blotted out."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 331.

Are you struggling with secret sin? Remind yourself of the means God makes available for you to obtain forgiveness and to be victorious. Are you utilizing these means?

FURTHER STUDY: Study the relationship between pastor and people and Paul's attitude to ministry as explained in 1 Corinthians 9:3-27. Read "Individual Responsibility and Christian Unity," *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 485-505.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways do your words and actions show support of the church's leadership?
2. When you hear criticisms of church leadership, do you go directly to the leader and talk the problem over with him or her? Do you believe the criticism and pass it on to someone else? If you are not able to contact the leader in person, what is your responsibility?

SUMMARY: Choosing elders to care for the church was Timothy's solemn responsibility. Church leaders are to be supported by the church that benefits from their service. Appointment to leadership office in the church is to be within scriptural guidelines. Charges against spiritual leaders are never to be accepted on mere hearsay. As the ultimate Judge, our Lord will punish sin and reward faithful service.

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Ministry to Servants and False Teachers



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 1 Tim. 6:1-21.

MEMORY TEXT: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses" (1 Timothy 6:12).

KEY THOUGHT: The world has changed in many ways since Paul's day but human nature has not, so the challenges involved in human relationships remain the same. Our attitudes and responses are just as crucial to our spirituality as were those of early Christians.

ONLY GOD'S WAY OF CHANGING THE WORLD IS EFFECTIVE. The final chapter of 1 Timothy contains principles that guide in sensitive human relationships. Slavery was common in the first century of the Christian era. How would Christianity modify master-servant relationships? How was the church to relate to false teachers? What effect does Christianity have upon the human preoccupation with material wealth? What should the Christian minister do to counteract the influence of worldly custom and culture?

"The reform must come through the slow penetration of the Spirit of Christ into the human situation. Things have to happen in God's time, not in ours."—William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, p. 122.

THE DUTY OF CHRISTIAN SLAVES (1 Tim. 6:1, 2).

What principle was to motivate slaves to show respect to their masters? 1 Tim. 6:1, 2.

It has been estimated that there were 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire in Paul's day. Christianity found many converts among this deprived segment of humanity. Any widespread discontent among the slaves posed a dire threat to their privileged masters. Christianity could well have been viewed suspiciously because it taught human equality. But it was also a religion of nonviolence; it did not call for the overthrow of political and social systems. It made of unequal men a brotherhood in which all stood at the same height in front of the cross.

Christian slaves were to serve faithfully and loyally. Christians were not to be social activists, attempting to force the abolition of slavery. They were to act as Christ would act in the social setting in which they found themselves. (See 1 Cor. 7:20-24.)

Wherever slavery exists, Paul's counsel is applicable. It also applies to Christian employees. They are to work in the spirit of Christ, performing their duties faithfully and uncomplainingly "so that the name of God and the teaching may not be defamed" (1 Tim. 6:1, RSV).

How should Christians react to unjust exploitation? Matt. 5:38-45 (compare Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-25).

Although Christ does not accept man-made inequality (Gal. 3:28), if the church had encouraged slaves to revolt against their masters, there might have been civil war and anarchy. Christianity would have been seriously discredited. "It was not the apostle's work to overturn arbitrarily or suddenly the established order of society. To attempt this would be to prevent the success of the gospel. But he taught principles which struck at the very foundation of slavery, and which, if carried into effect, would surely undermine the whole system."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 459, 460.

As an employee, do you sometimes feel that you are being forced to unpleasant labor simply because of economic necessity? How can you put the Bible counsel into effect?

FALSE TEACHERS AND THEIR IDENTIFYING MARKS
(1 Tim. 6:3-5).

False teachers threaten the church. Because of their refusal to accept sound doctrine, destructive elements plague the Christian community. (See 2 Tim. 4:3, 4.)

1 Timothy 6:3 suggests that there were some in Ephesus whose teaching was diametrically opposed to the counsel Paul had been inspired to give. They were advocating wrong attitudes of Christian slaves toward their masters, and were not following divine counsel in other respects.

Whose words did Paul say were to be used as the standard for Christian attitudes and lifestyle? 1 Tim. 6:3 (compare Gal. 1:7-12; Phil. 2:2-5).

Paul speaks of "the words of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 6:3). It is not known how widely circulated the gospel was in written form in Paul's day. Certainly the apostles, aided by the Holy Spirit (John 14:26), preserved the oral tradition as they passed on to their churches the words that Jesus had spoken during His earthly ministry.

The doctrine taught by the Lord Jesus contrasted sharply with that of Jewish teachers of the law. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus had revealed that motives are more important than overt acts. Only as the spirit of God's law is cherished by complete reliance upon Christ can behavior conform to His righteous standard. (See Rom. 8:3, 4.)

Review Matthew 5-7 and note some of the areas of life that Jesus' instruction covered.

How can false teachers be recognized? 1 Tim. 6:4, 5.

(1) They are conceited; (2) they lack real knowledge; (3) they thrive on difficult questions and argumentation, which result in strife, condemnation, and insinuation; (4) their arguments are devoid of truth and give evidence of their source—corrupt minds; (5) by subtle methods they attract means to themselves. By contrast the true servant of Christ is willing to spend and be spent in His service.

In what manner do you think the church should relate to false teachers among us today?

THE CHRISTIAN AND RICHES (1 Tim. 6:6-11).

What two elements go together to constitute real gain? 1 Tim. 6:6-8; Phil. 4:11.

Contentment finds its source, not in material means, but in godliness of heart resulting from fellowship with Christ.

"Paul here defines the most priceless possession man can own. Men and women have searched the world for peace of mind and an untroubled heart. Billions of dollars are being spent annually as man endeavors to find contentment in amusement, travel, liquor, and the satisfaction of physical passion. Yet, the object of their quest eludes them because man must still live with his conscience and face the question of his eternal destiny. However, the gift of God is not only eternal life; it also brings an untroubled mind, one that has learned to trust a loving God amid all the uncertainties of life."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 317.

To what dangers are the rich and the would-be-rich exposed? 1 Tim. 6:9, 10 (compare Deut. 8:13, 14; Mark 4:19; Matt. 19:23-26).

The RSV translates 1 Timothy 6:9: "But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation." It is not so much the possession of wealth that is potentially dangerous, but the obsession with its accumulation and the employment of it for one's own ends.

Paul's inspired counsel was directed to the church in Ephesus, but in a very real sense to Timothy.

"Thus the apostle emphasized the minister's need of unre-served consecration to the Master's service. The minister who is wholly consecrated to God refuses to engage in business that would hinder him from giving himself fully to his sacred calling. He is not striving for earthly honor or riches; his one purpose is to tell others of the Saviour, who gave Himself to bring to human beings the riches of eternal life."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 366.

Instead of riches, what six spiritual values was Timothy to seek? 1 Tim. 6:11. What influence has the desire for material things had on your spiritual life? How do you go about seeking the six attributes Paul recommended?

THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH (1 Tim. 6:12).

What is meant by "the good fight of faith"? 1 Tim. 6:12; Eph. 6:10-18.

As Timothy was challenged to engage in spiritual conquests, he was reminded of the way in which God had already led him. Paul was well aware that a number of the Lord's servants had succumbed to the allurements of the world—to riches, honor, and sensual pleasure. (See 2 Tim. 4:10.)

The Christian fights the good fight of faith by exercising trust in Christ. The result is consistent Christian life and effective presentation of truth.

"Oh, for a living, active faith! We need it; we must have it, or we shall faint and fail in the day of trial. The darkness that will then rest upon our path must not discourage us or drive us to despair. It is the veil with which God covers His glory when He comes to impart rich blessings. We should know this by our past experience. In that day when God has a controversy with His people this experience will be a source of comfort and hope."—*Counsels for the Church*, p. 334.

Note the various components of the Christian's armor (Eph. 6:13-17). Alongside each of the following, list the spiritual armor:

Loins _____ Chest (breastplate) _____

Feet _____ Shield _____

Head (helmet) _____ Sword _____

Of the six items of armor that Paul mentions, five are protective against the darts of the enemy. The sword completes the soldier's equipment and is the one weapon used both defensively and offensively. Without a thorough knowledge of God's Word, Christians are powerless before the enemy of souls. Without it they are not equipped to reach out effectively to men and women held captive.

In what ways may my church present Christian truth in an age dominated by materialism, selfishness, and personal ambition? How may I cooperate?

A CHARGE TO TIMOTHY (1 Tim. 6:13-16).

The closing portion of this letter to Timothy abounds with wise, fatherly counsel. It is more than good advice; it takes the form of a charge or command. Paul gives two specific commands: (1) Timothy is to live an exemplary life. (2) The rich are to be generous to those less fortunate, "thus laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future" (1 Tim. 6:19, RSV).

What does constant awareness of God's presence do for the Christian? 1 Tim. 6:13.

Timothy was to remember that he lived in the presence of God. He was to " 'fight the good fight of faith' (see v. 12) before his witnessing Lord and before the many 'witnesses' (v. 12) who will judge the merits of Christianity by his deportment."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 319, 320.

For how long was Timothy to keep this charge, and how carefully was it to be kept? 1 Tim. 6:14.

Some believe that this "commandment" referred to Timothy's baptismal vow. Others hold that Paul was referring to the counsels in this Epistle. The *SDA Bible Commentary* aptly states, "In the final analysis, the Christian witness to the supreme merits of God's way of life constitutes Paul's challenge."—Vol. 7, p. 320.

What transcendent divine attributes of Christ did Paul call Timothy to be aware of as he lived an exemplary life in anticipation of His coming? 1 Tim. 6:15, 16.

Although sin has rendered it impossible for sinful man to behold God, the Gospel brings to every believer the assurance that through Christ the pure in heart will, some day, see God and live. (See Matt. 5:8; 1 John 3:2.)

How could 1 Timothy 6:16 help in a Bible study on the subject of man's condition in death? What great change is promised the redeemed and when will it happen? 1 Cor. 15:51-54.

FURTHER STUDY: What commands was Timothy to give to those rich in this world's goods? 1 Tim. 6:17-19 (compare verses 5-10). What final warning was given to Timothy, and for what reason? 1 Tim. 6:20, 21.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What issues, if any, in your church are detracting from the members' active proclamation of the gospel of salvation? What can be done to re-establish priorities?
2. Had this Epistle been written to you, what would have been directly applicable? What else might Paul have brought to your attention?

SUMMARY: In closing his first letter to Timothy, Paul continued with the practical, timely counsel so typical of his writings. Since many early Christians were slaves, it was important that, despite their difficult social position, their conduct should testify to the power of Christ. Paul also gave instruction to the rich in the church, false teachers, and finally Timothy, who was to testify to the purity and excellence of the gospel.



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The Organization of the Church



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Titus 1.

MEMORY TEXT: "Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless" (Titus 1:7, NIV).

KEY THOUGHT: True spiritual leaders of the church are faithful to Christ and committed to Bible truth. False leaders are self-serving and committed to error.

INTRODUCTION TO TITUS. A converted pagan, Titus accompanied Paul from Antioch to the Jerusalem council about A.D. 49 (Gal. 2:1-3). On Paul's third missionary journey, Titus was sent from Ephesus to Corinth as Paul's representative (2 Cor. 8:16, 17; 12:17, 18). Later he met Paul in Macedonia and traveled ahead of him to Corinth, carrying the Second Epistle to the Corinthian church (2 Cor. 2:13; 7:6, 13; 8:6, 23). After Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, he left Titus in Crete (Titus 1:5) and journeyed to Ephesus and Macedonia (1 Tim. 1:3). From Macedonia Paul wrote the first letter to Timothy, who was in Ephesus, and the letter to Titus, who was in Crete. Paul urged Titus to meet him at Nicopolis in Achaia on the Adriatic coast (Titus 3:12). Titus was with Paul in Rome during his second imprisonment. From there Paul sent him to Dalmatia (2 Tim. 4:10), on the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea, north of Greece, part of present-day Yugoslavia.

PAUL'S AUTHORITY (Titus 1:1).

Cretans who were present in Jerusalem at Pentecost (Acts 2:11) may have introduced the gospel to the island. Possibly also Paul took the gospel to Crete during his last missionary journey. (See *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 107.)

By what familiar terms does Paul introduce himself in his letter to Titus? Titus 1:1.

The analogy of slavery illustrates Jesus' complete surrender and dedication to His mission. (See Phil. 2:7, 8.) The fundamental concept of Christian ministry is willing servanthood and servitude. (See Matt. 20:25-28.) But it is well to remember: (1) The gospel is not exploitive. (2) The gospel does not crush one's individuality; it enhances it. (3) One's commitment and servitude must be voluntary, stemming from a deep sense of appreciation and indebtedness for the freedom that is beyond our human ability to obtain. (See Rom. 6:23.)

"Before honor is humility. To fill a high place before men, Heaven chooses the worker who, like John the Baptist, takes a lowly place before God. The most childlike disciple is the most efficient in labor for God. The heavenly intelligences can cooperate with him who is seeking, not to exalt self, but to save souls."—*Christian Service*, p. 247.

Of what significance is Paul's claim to be an apostle of Jesus Christ? Titus 1:1; Gal. 1:1.

"The authority of Jesus Christ, who personally commissioned Paul to the apostolate (see on Col. 1:11, 12), is the supreme authority of the eternal God. Paul's embassy is from the Most High; his credentials were presented to him on the Damascus road (Acts 9:15; 22:14, 15; 26:16, 17; Col. 1:1)."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 358. Paul's divine credentials provide undisputed legitimacy to Titus' commission and authority as the gospel's ambassador on the island of Crete.

What would you tell your neighbor to get him excited about being a slave to Christ rather than a slave to sin?

THE AIM OF PAUL'S MINISTRY (Titus 1:1-3).

For what major purpose was Paul a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ? Titus 1:1.

Randolph O. Yeager translates the verse: "Paul, God's servant and apostle of Jesus Christ to promote the faith of God's elect and increase the understanding of the truth that comports with godliness."—*The Renaissance New Testament*. The all-consuming passion of Paul's life was winning souls to Christ and nurturing their spiritual life. He knew that the ultimate eternal existence of those who responded to the gospel depended on their enduring to the end. (See Matt. 24:13.) Paul strove "to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth" (Titus 1:1, RSV).

"The elect" are those whom God foresaw would exercise faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. (See Rom. 8:29, 30; 1 Peter 1:2.)

"Knowledge of the truth which accords with godliness" (Titus 1:1, RSV) is not mere intellectual knowledge. It is experiential knowledge—the experience of godliness by faith in Jesus Christ. (Compare Rom. 10:8-10.)

How far-reaching and certain is the Christian hope that Paul emphasized? Titus 1:2, 3 (compare 2 Tim. 1:9).

The hope of eternal life for every believer is founded on the promise of God. This promise was made in the eternal ages prior to Creation as God foresaw mankind's fall into sin and humanity's reception of God's grace. (See Rom. 5:17.)

Eternal life begins now for those who believe in Jesus and receive His Spirit into their hearts. (See John 3:36; 1 John 5:11-14.) "Those who see Christ in His true character, and receive Him into the heart, have everlasting life. It is through the Spirit that Christ dwells in us; and the Spirit of God, received into the heart by faith, is the beginning of the life eternal."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 388.

Both the Father and Christ are referred to as Saviour from whom come grace and peace (Titus 1:3, 4). "God Himself was crucified with Christ; for Christ was one with the Father."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1108.

WHY PAUL LEFT TITUS IN CRETE (Titus 1:5).

For what reason had Paul left Titus in Crete? Titus 1:5.

"The job of an assistant left by Paul in such circumstances would be specially trying and difficult. There would be, for one thing, an almost inevitable drop in the spiritual temperature, when the personality of Paul was withdrawn. But the teacher or helper was expected to stay and get on with the work: he would try not merely to build up the faith of those recently converted; he would also seek to work outwards, evangelising neighbouring villages or towns."—A. E. Gould, *Little-Known Little Books of the Bible* (London: Independent Press, Ltd., 1961), p. 135.

Evidently at the time of Paul's departure from Crete there had not been opportunity to organize the Christian community scattered "in every city" (verse 5).

For what three specific purposes did Paul ask Titus to remain on Crete?

Titus 1:3 _____

Titus 1:5 _____

Titus 1:10, 11 _____

How extensive was the spread of the gospel in Crete? Titus 1:5.

A. E. Gould notes: "Within a few weeks or months of being converted and baptized into the Christian faith, the new convert would find himself witnessing to the name and power of Christ to people who were exactly as he had been so short a time before. It sounds a frightening kind of strategy to us, perhaps, but psychologically, it is surely as sound as a bell. It is the person who is encouraged to put his newfound faith into words and actions at once, whose faith is strengthened and built up by that very process."—*Little-Known Little Books of the Bible*, pp. 135, 136.

What could you—and will you—do this week to assist a new believer in sharing his or her faith with someone?

HOW LEADERS SHOULD BE QUALIFIED (Titus 1:6-9).

The instruction given to Titus for the choice and appointment of leaders in the church was very similar to that which Timothy was to follow in Ephesus. (See 1 Timothy 3.) Note the contrasting characteristics—positive qualities that were to be sought in a church leader, and negative characteristics that were to be avoided.

List the positive character qualities that are to be possessed by an elder or bishop. Titus 1:6-9.

Why do you think the character qualities related to the elder's home and family life are important in an individual who holds office in the church?

"There should exist in the minister's family a unity that will preach an effectual sermon on practical godliness. As the minister and his wife faithfully do their duty in the home, restraining, correcting, advising, counseling, guiding, they are becoming better fitted to labor in the church, and are multiplying agencies for the accomplishment of God's work outside the home. The members of the family become members of the family above, and are a power for good, exerting a far-reaching influence."—*Gospel Workers*, pp. 204, 205.

List three ways in which church leaders and members can help to ensure that their children are a positive influence in the church community.

Itemize characteristics an elder should not have. Titus 1:7. What effect might such character weaknesses have upon a church leader's ministry?

FALSE TEACHERS SHOULD BE SILENCED (Titus 1:9-16).

What two purposes are served by church leaders who are effective teachers of God's Word? Titus 1:9.

The best way to refute error is to present truth in a positive, convincing manner. Attacks on false teachers can result in controversy and division. H. M. S. Richards, Sr., once advised: "When you go before the people, don't tell them it's *not this*; tell them it is *this!*"

How effectively were these false teachers to be dealt with? Titus 1:10-13.

Notice how they: (1) subverted, or overthrew, the faith of whole households; (2) were unruly, or rebellious; (3) were vain talkers; (4) were deceivers; (5) taught from questionable motives, "for filthy lucre's sake" (verse 11); (6) were spiritually defiled (verse 15; compare 1 Timothy 4:2).

In contrast to these false teachers, Christians "must be first-class advertisements for the faith they profess: they must commend the gospel not only with their lips, but in their daily lives. Their Christianity must be 'action, not diction.'"—A. E. Gould, *Little-Known Little Books of the Bible*, p. 137.

What was the issue that gave rise to Paul's statements recorded in Titus 1:14-16?

The "gainsayers," or false teachers who opposed sound doctrine, seemed to dog the footsteps of the apostles in every place where the gospel was preached and accepted. These opposers of truth cherished and propagated a mixture of Jewish legalism, mysticism, and man-made teachings.

The "circumcision party" (verse 10, RSV) were legalistic Jewish Christians who were propagating "Jewish myths" (verse 14, RSV). Evidently Jewish and Greek ideas were being combined to direct believers away from the simple gospel of salvation. (Compare 1 Tim. 1:3-7.)

What methods can the Christian church *not* use in silencing those who teach error?

FURTHER STUDY: Study in some reliable historical source about the island of Crete—its early history, its peoples, its customs and religion. This will give meaning to Paul's bold assertion in Titus 1:12, 13 that the early Cretans were liars, evil, and lazy. (A Bible dictionary or a history of Greece could be helpful.)

Read the Scripture passage for this week again before coming to the discussion questions below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Compare the counsel to Titus with that to Timothy on the subjects raised in this week's lesson.
2. Paul speaks of "sound doctrine" (Titus 1:9). Why is doctrine effective in winning and nurturing souls? What use of Bible doctrine can render it ineffective?
3. If you had been one of the Cretans who were popularly referred to as "liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons," how would you have reacted?
4. Review briefly the history of the "circumcision party" mentioned in Titus 1:10. Can you identify parties like that in the church today? How would you put into practice Paul's counsel that they "must be silenced" (verse 11, RSV)?
5. What is the practical use of Titus 1:2 in presenting the gospel to others?

SUMMARY: Paul left Titus on the island of Crete to complete his own unfinished task by the appointment of elders. Their personal lifestyle and witness was to be effective not only for the truth, but in silencing the disruptive and deceptive teachings of opponents of the gospel. The word of truth was to be the most effective means of counteracting error.

Guidelines to Christian Character



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Titus 2:1-10.

MEMORY TEXT: "Show yourself in all respects a model of good deeds, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity, and sound speech that cannot be censured" (Titus 2:7, 8, RSV).

KEY THOUGHT: Christian character stems from fellowship with Christ that manifests itself in loving, loyal attitudes and deeds.

CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR is very much a part of sound doctrine (Titus 2:1). Attitudes and behavior that God can accept are inseparably linked with holiness. We are not holy by nature; holiness (sanctification) is Christ's gift to us by the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:1, 2; 2 Thess. 2:13). Holiness is evidenced through Christlike living.

The book of Hebrews speaks of "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). Holiness is righteousness. (See *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 18.) Righteousness (holiness), as Jesus defined it in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5), is a pure attitude of mind that manifests itself in outward acts acceptable to God. Paul taught that Christ died, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us" (Rom. 8:3, 4). Christ within is righteousness or holiness within. The result is holy thoughts, words, and acts directed by the Holy Spirit.

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER: SENIOR MEN (Titus 2:2).

What character qualities were to typify the Christian lifestyle of older men in the church? Titus 2:2.

Sober or temperate: As pointed out in Lesson 5, the Greek word *nephalios* means "without wine, temperate." Aged men in Crete who had come to know Christ needed to forsake the habits developed in their pre-Christian days. Indulgence in the use of alcohol was thoroughly inconsistent with their new life in Christ. The Bible commands total abstinence from alcohol.

Grave: The Greek word means "worthy of respect or honor, noble, dignified, serious." Aged men were to be worthy of the respect that their seniority demanded. Dignity does not rule out happy, joyful living. Rather, it facilitates real joy; it enables its possessor to experience profoundly positive interpersonal relationships.

Temperate: From the Greek meaning "prudent, thoughtful, self-controlled." Compare this with 2 Timothy 1:7, where Paul states that Christians have divinely bestowed mental and emotional powers enabling them to cope with life's emergencies and pressures.

In what three areas were elderly Christian men to be "sound" or "healthy"? Titus 2:2 (last part).

"Soundness in faith means that the older men go on exercising their faith, go on believing and trusting, in both the normal life of the church (cf. 1 Tim. 2:2) and in its strenuous endeavors and emergencies."—Ronald A. Ward, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus* (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1974), p. 251.

Soundness in *charity* or love is a vital need of the elderly who, as a result of advancing years and declining physical well-being, sometimes tend to be more faultfinding.

Patience: The Greek word means "endurance, fortitude, steadfastness, perseverance." This is one of the key characteristics of God's people in the end-time. (See Rev. 14:12.) A lifetime of patient endurance begets sterling character and a spirit of hope. (See Rom. 5:3, 4.)

How should church members respond to an older man who does not have the characteristics Paul commands?

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER: SENIOR WOMEN (Titus 2:3-5).

In what Christian virtues are older women admonished to be strong? Titus 2:3, 4.

Women occupy a very important place in the home, in the workplace, in society, and in the church. It has been aptly said: "The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world." Perhaps more than anyone else, women mold the characters of their children. Young mothers are children's earliest teachers. While the Christian father is to be the priest of the family, the mother has the privilege of weaving the likeness of the divine into the fabric of her child's character.

Senior women are in an advantaged position to play a vital role in the life of the church because of their maturity, sound judgment, and deep understanding of life.

Titus was to exhort the older women not to be party to malicious gossip. Compare this counsel to that which Paul gave to younger women who were widows (1 Tim. 5:14, 15).

Read the chapters entitled, "Influence of the Mother" and "Misconception of the Mother's Work" in *The Adventist Home*, pp. 240-247.

What specific teaching responsibilities do older women have toward those who are younger? Titus 2:4, 5.

"The virtues of womanhood are best transmitted from one generation to another by emotionally mature women who have learned well the lessons of self-discipline and personal piety. It is tragic for young women to assume the duties of wifehood and motherhood without having been properly taught by precept and example the responsibilities of Christian womanhood."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 364.

What enduring values would you consider to be vital to be passed on from one generation to another?

Is there a conscious commitment to and effort toward the transmission of Christian virtues from the older to the younger generation in your church? If not, what can you do to facilitate this?

How may a Christian mother in today's world cope with increasing pressures and, at the same time, fulfill her mission to her family? List some practical suggestions.

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER: YOUNGER WOMEN AND YOUNGER MEN (Titus 2:4-6).

What behavior patterns are to characterize Christian young women? Titus 2:4, 5.

In the Greek world of the early church it was rare for a self-respecting young woman to be found alone outside the home. In fact, she was seldom seen even in the company of male family members.

Barclay throws light on Paul's position: "If the women of the ancient Church had suddenly burst every limitation which the centuries had imposed upon them, the only result would have been to bring discredit on the Church and cause people to say that Christianity corrupted womanhood. The life laid down here seems narrow and circumscribed, but it is to be read against its background."

Even so, the counsel is timeless. Barclay adds: "It is the simple fact that there is no greater task, responsibility and privilege in this world than to make a home. . . . There is in fact nowhere where a truly religious life can better be lived than within the home."—*The Letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, p. 250.

Note that the phrase "obedient to their own husbands" (Titus 2:5) may be translated "submissive to their husbands" (RSV). In the light of the problems of some women mentioned in 2 Timothy 3:6, 7, the counsel is entirely applicable. A woman's submission to her wifely role does not imply inferiority to her husband, any more than his submission to his role involves inferiority to her.

To what was Titus to exhort young men? Titus 2:6.

Whereas older women were to be the example to younger women, Titus was to provide the pattern of conduct for the younger men (verse 7). Being young himself, he could be a powerful influence for good. Young men are "to control themselves" (verse 6, RSV), "that the word of God may not be discredited" (verse 5, RSV).

How may we apply the principles stated in Titus 2:4-6 to life situations today? How may a working wife/mother have the assurance that she is not putting aside her responsibility as a homemaker?

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER: THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER
(Titus 2:7, 8).

In what areas was Titus to be exemplary? Titus 2:7, 8.

"A pattern of good works": Christian elders, pastors, or teachers should ever be examples for others to follow. They are to be leaders, but never dictators. (See Mark 10:42-45.) As undershepherds, their greatest concern is for the spiritual welfare of the flock. They are never to be driven or coerced. Of a true shepherd Jesus said: "The sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow" (John 10:4, 5). Christ's indictment of false shepherds was that they forsake the sheep to the destructive attacks of wolves (John 10:12).

"In doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity": Titus was to be dignified. Christian dignity is not arrogance or aloofness. It is courtesy, consideration, and poise. The emphasis is upon Titus' example as a Christian.

"Sound speech, that cannot be condemned": "He must have a sound message. The Christian teacher and preacher must be certain to propagate the truths of the gospel and not his own ideas. There is nothing easier for him than to spend his time on side-issues; he might well have one prayer: 'God, give me a sense of proportion.' The central things of the faith will last him a lifetime. As soon as he becomes a propagandist either for his own ideas or for some sectional interest, he ceases to be an effective preacher or teacher of the word of God."—William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, p. 253.

Why was this admonition to Titus so important? Titus 2:8, last part.

Opponents of Bible truth, who find it difficult to find anything wrong with the message, will sometimes attack the character of the messenger. The slightest divergence from strict Christian integrity on his or her part will be seized upon as a means of discrediting the message.

How does Paul's counsel to Titus apply to our public utterances and written statements today? What kinds of speech or writing are likely to discredit the Advent message in the minds of those not of our faith?

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER: CHRISTIAN WORKMEN (Titus 2:9, 10).

We will relate Paul's counsel to Christian employees rather than exclusively to "servants" or "slaves," referred to in the Greek. The principles stated have universal application today.

What conduct was to characterize the service of employees? Titus 2:9, 10.

Paul's concern was that Christian employees should testify to their faith, making "the teaching about God our Saviour attractive" (Titus 2:10, NIV). Paul lists the character qualities of Christian employees:

Obedient: They are to be willing to be led and to do their work in a manner required by the employer. Of course, such obedience to a human employer must never countermand supreme obedience to God. "Obeying the truth" (1 Peter 1:22, NIV) might sometimes involve disobeying an order of a superior. But we have the assurance that God will honor those who honor Him. (See Dan. 3:16-18; 6:10.) This principle rules out work on the Sabbath day (Ex. 20:8-11), but demands our total commitment to the task on other days of the week.

Congenial: Paul means "not contradicting" (verse 9, last part) the employer, not taking a contrary position regarding how the job is to be done. A Christian will have suggestions when called for, but will not attempt to take the control of the enterprise out of the employer's hands.

Strictly honest: "Not purloining" (verse 10) means "not putting aside for oneself, not misappropriating." The Christian employee will never take that which does not belong to him; he will never misappropriate funds or help himself to equipment or products. Nor will he steal time by attending to his own interests while on the job.

Faithful: The Christian employee will be loyal to his employer. He will "show entire and true fidelity" (verse 10, RSV). This rules out unkind criticism of the boss or the product. It rules out having a conflict of interests, or using confidential knowledge of the business to advance one's own financial or professional position.

Are you a model Christian employee? In what ways do you measure up to the standard set by Paul's inspired counsel? In what ways do you need to improve?

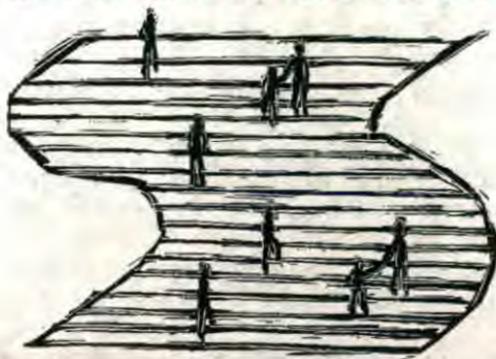
FURTHER STUDY: In relation to Paul's counsel to Titus, study Peter's counsel regarding submission: 1 Peter 2:13-24. Read "Business Principles and Methods" in *Education*, pp. 135-145.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How should you respond if your employer ridicules your religion?
2. How would you act if the only way you could get a job was to work on the Sabbath? Would you send your children to school on Sabbath if it was demanded by the state? Would you break the Sabbath commandment if secular law required it? (Consider Rev. 13:16, 17.)
3. Review the relationships Titus 2 says should exist between old and young in the church. Are these relationships preserved in your church? How would you recommend that your church come more into line with the divine counsel?
4. How would you go about helping a husband who, on the basis of Titus 2:5, makes unjust demands for obedience from his wife? If asked, what counsel would you give them?

SUMMARY: The development of Christian character formed a large part of Paul's concern for the churches on the island of Crete. The ultimate purpose of the word of truth (sound doctrine) that Titus was to teach and preach was the transformation of sinners into saints. The gospel of Christ is to be exemplified and witnessed to by every age group in the church. The gospel in action at home, in the church, and in the work place is to counteract effectively the spurious doctrines of false teachers and the prejudices of those not of our faith.

Godly Living Here and Hereafter



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Titus 2:11-15.

MEMORY TEXT: "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14).

KEY THOUGHT: We prepare for the second coming of Jesus by receiving His saving grace as the power to overcome sin and to do works that God can accept.

CHRIST MOTIVATES AND EMPOWERS US. Paul concludes chapter 2 of his letter to Titus by identifying the spiritual and motivational force for Christians. Verse 11 presents God's grace as the power for Christian living. Christian living is not motivated by material advantages, but by the love of God and the awareness of a high destiny at the second coming of Jesus. To be like Jesus is an overriding priority for those whom He has ransomed from sin.

To the believers in Philippi, Paul expressed his wish to "be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. 3:9). The Christian's deepest and most fervent desire is to "know him [Jesus], and the power of his resurrection" (Phil. 3:10). Exemplary living, not through our own efforts, but by His indwelling presence and enabling power, is the Christian response to Christ.

THE GRACE OF GOD REVEALED (Titus 2:11).

When did God favor humanity with the ultimate revelation of Himself? Gal. 4:4 (compare Dan. 9:25). In what profound and miraculous way did this revelation take place? Matt. 1:21, 23 (compare John 1:14).

"Our little world is the lesson book of the universe. God's wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which 'angels desire to look,' and it will be their study throughout endless ages. Both the redeemed and the unfallen beings will find in the cross of Christ their science and their song."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 19, 20.

What eternally significant benefit did the incarnation bring for humanity? Titus 2:11.

God's grace is His infinite mercy and love for lost humanity, made available, without any merit on our part, through the sacrifice of Christ. Christ was "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14), and He fills us with His fullness (verse 16). In Christ the gift of God's grace paid the penalty for the sins of all humanity (Rom. 5:15, 18; 1 John 2:2). But only those who willingly "receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:17, RSV).

God's grace is both His favor manifested in Christ's objective work *for* us and manifested in His transforming, empowering work *in* us. (See Acts 4:33; Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 1:4-7; 15:10; 2 Cor. 9:8, 14; 2 Peter 3:18.)

"Through the merits of Christ he [mankind] can be restored to harmony with his Maker. *His heart must be renewed by divine grace; he must have a new life from above. This change is the new birth, without which, says Jesus, 'he cannot see the kingdom of God.'*"—*The Great Controversy*, p. 467. "It is beyond the power of man to conceive the high and noble attainments that are within his reach if he will combine human effort with the grace of God, who is the Source of all wisdom and power."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 446. (See Eph. 2:8-10.)

What can you do to experience more of the power of Christ's grace in your life this week?

GOD'S GRACE MAKES GODLY LIVING POSSIBLE (Titus 2:12).

What kind of lives are lived by those who by faith receive the gift of God's grace? Titus 2:12.

As Christ rejected sin in all its forms, so His grace is the power to enable us to do the same. As He overcame, so may we (Rev. 3:21). When His "grace and peace" are "multiplied" to us we have "divine power" for "godliness" and Christian virtue (2 Peter 1:2, 3). When we partake of grace we are "partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (verse 4). This grace or power is bestowed upon us by the Holy Spirit. The "Spirit of grace" (Heb. 10:29) in the heart is Christ's presence bringing the virtues listed by Paul.

What is the significance of the three virtues that Christians are to exemplify to the world around them? Titus 2:12.

Discretion: "We should live *soberly*." The word refers to prudence, wisdom, self-control. Grace-filled Christians have wisdom to handle life's challenges. God's grace enriches them "with all speech and all knowledge," so that they have the spiritual gifts necessary for the fulfillment of God's will for their lives (1 Cor. 1:4-7, RSV).

Righteousness: Righteousness is purity, holiness, oneness with the will of God. Justified believers are willing "slaves of righteousness" (Rom. 6:18, RSV). Because God's law has been written on their hearts by the Holy Spirit, they experience righteousness of heart that emanates in righteousness of conduct. (See Rom. 8:9, 10; 10:6-10.) Thus they are qualified for life both here and hereafter. (See Matt. 25:46.)

Godliness: The Greek word means piety—total loyalty to God revealed in scrupulous conduct.

"That the efforts of God's workers may be successful, they must receive the grace and efficiency that He alone can give. 'Ask, and ye shall receive' (John 16:24), is the promise. Then why not take time to ask, to open the mind to the impressions of the Holy Spirit, that the soul may be revived by a fresh supply of life?"—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 251.

GRACE DIRECTS THE CHRISTIAN'S FOCUS (Titus 2:13).

To what event does God's grace direct the Christian? Titus 2:13.

The believer saved by grace looks for, lives for, expects the return of his Lord. The saving-grace revelation that dispels moral darkness and lightens the pathway of regenerated sinners, makes them aware of the ultimate goal of salvation. Paul focused the eyes of the Corinthian believers upon the glorious final objective of saving grace when he wrote, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22). He was referring to the never-ending life that the saints will experience at the glorious return of Jesus. This is the "blessed hope," the fulfillment of which the believer earnestly anticipates and patiently awaits.

"The hope of Christ's return has been the grand incentive of the Christian faith for nearly 2,000 years, buoying the believer's spirit and steeling his courage amid all the vicissitudes of life. The dark moments of discouragement, disillusionment, or sorrow in this life's experience are gloriously compensated for by the Christian's hope in the second advent."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 366.

What is the goal of Christ's earthly and heavenly ministry? John 14:1-3; Rev. 21:3.

Jesus was referred to in the Old Testament as Emmanuel, "God with us." (See Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23.) When He left His disciples to return to His Father, the angels reiterated His promise by saying, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). The Scriptures leave no doubt that Jesus longs to be reunited with those saved by grace because of His sacrifice. In His mediatorial prayer shortly before He gave His life as a ransom to save lost humanity, He asked the Father that His disciples might share heaven with Him. (See John 17:24.)

Where does "the blessed hope" come in your list of life's priorities? What could you do this week to make this same hope a reality in the lives of others?

A PEOPLE SAVED TO BE UNIQUELY CHRIST'S (Titus 2:14, 15).

To what lengths did Christ go when He "gave himself for us" (Titus 2:14)? Heb. 2:16-18; 4:15; Phil. 2:6-8.

"Christ 'gave himself' as a voluntary sacrifice for His wayward creation. . . . In the person of Jesus Christ, God revealed the love of the divine Father. . . . Christ's gift cancels all doubts regarding the supreme splendor of God's love to those who have disobeyed Him."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 367.

"Christ is the ladder that Jacob saw, the base resting on the earth, and the topmost round reaching to the gate of heaven, to the very threshold of glory. If that ladder had failed by a single step of reaching the earth, we should have been lost. But Christ reaches us where we are. He took our nature and overcame, that we through taking His nature might overcome."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 311, 312.

From what has Jesus redeemed us, and for what grand purpose? Titus 2:14 (compare 1 Peter 2:24; John 10:10).

Christ's suffering on the cross was the ransom price paid to deliver us "from all iniquity." Are we to be delivered from all sin in this life or at the Second Advent? The Bible answer is unmistakable: "As he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct" (1 Peter 1:15, RSV).

"We are preparing to meet Him who, escorted by a retinue of holy angels, is to appear in the clouds of heaven to give the faithful and the just the finishing touch of immortality. When He comes He is not to cleanse us of our sins, to remove from us the defects in our characters, or to cure us of the infirmities of our tempers and dispositions. If wrought for us at all, this work will all be accomplished before that time."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 355.

How spiritually pure are God's people to be before the second coming of Jesus? Eph. 4:13; 5:25-27.

Do you believe Christ can give you victory over all sin? What will happen to God's people when they enjoy that victory? (See *Early Writings*, pp. 270, 271.)

A PEOPLE FOR HIMSELF (Titus 2:14, 15).

What did Paul mean when he described the lifestyle of redeemed sinners as "a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14, last part)? Phil 2:15, 16 (compare 1 Peter 2:9; Rev. 1:6).

The word "peculiar" (Titus 2:14) translates the Greek word meaning "chosen, special." The phrase may be translated: "and to purify for himself a people that are his very own" (NIV). We are Christ's very own for five reasons: (1) He bought us from a life of sin by paying the ransom price on the cross (1 Peter 1:18, 19). (2) When we seek His forgiveness, He wipes out our guilt (1 John 1:9; Micah 7:19). (3) In response to His offer, we invite Him to live in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (John 14:18-23). (4) He gives us the power (grace) to overcome sin that in our own strength we cannot conquer (Jude 24; 1 John 5:4). (5) He works through us to demonstrate the character of God to the world and to influence other souls for His glory (Phil. 2:13; 1 Peter 4:11).

How did Jesus define the mission of the church? Luke 24:47, 48; Mark 16:15.

"In our own families may be souls hungry for sympathy, starving for the bread of life. There may be children to be trained for Christ. There are heathen at our very doors. Let us do faithfully the work that is nearest. . . .

"But the command, 'Go ye into all the world,' is not to be lost sight of. We are called upon to lift our eyes to the 'regions beyond.' Christ tears away the wall of partition, the dividing prejudice of nationality, and teaches a love for all the human family. He lifts men from the narrow circle which their selfishness prescribes; He abolishes all territorial lines and artificial distinctions of society. He makes no difference between neighbors and strangers, friends and enemies. He teaches us to look upon every needy soul as our brother, and the world as our field."—The Desire of Ages, pp. 822, 823.

Make a list of your opportunities to witness in a concrete way to those in your neighborhood, at work, and in distant places.

FURTHER STUDY: In what three ways was Titus to convey to the church the truths Paul had taught? Titus 2:15. Compare 2 Tim. 4:2, 3. Read "The First Evangelists" in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 353-358.

"Paul here gives three methods of teaching and leading Christian congregations. Some church members are eager to listen; others need additional urging and more direct counsel; still others, for various reasons, need stronger admonition coupled with incontrovertible evidence."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 367.

There might have been opposition from those who could not stand sound doctrine, such as the false teachers we met in chapter 1. But Titus was not to be daunted by such opposition. He was to fulfill his duty irrespective of circumstances and consequences.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why have the believers in the Advent message not yet received the "latter rain" promised in Scripture and the writings of Ellen White?
2. Since God's grace can deliver us from sin, why don't we have complete victory over all sin all the time?
3. What is the relationship between overcoming sin and receiving the end-time seal of God?
4. How would you help persons who complain that there are sins in their lives that they cannot overcome?

SUMMARY: Christians are God's special people, not because of any merit of their own or because of their accomplishments. The Creator Himself paid the ransom price for their redemption from all sin. Jesus saves us from the power of sin and ordains us as His special ambassadors. By the way we live, we are to exemplify the character of God that Jesus so ably demonstrated in His life on earth. The goal of the committed believer is the realization of the "blessed hope" when Jesus comes to claim His own.

Rebirth Is Renewal



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Titus 3.

MEMORY TEXT: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5).

KEY THOUGHT: Spiritual rebirth by faith and daily living by faith in Jesus Christ result in the power to follow the inspired practical counsel given by Paul.

PAUL CONCLUDES HIS INSTRUCTION TO TITUS. In the concluding chapter of his Epistle to Titus, Paul reemphasizes the importance of exemplary living. In his relationships with secular authorities the Christian should not only be above reproach, but should "be ready to do whatever is good" (verse 1, NIV).

When we were living in habitual sin, we were ruled by our passions and in constant conflict with our fellow human beings. Then came rebirth and renewal by the inner saving work of the Holy Spirit. The power to live as God instructs is provided by the saving grace of Christ bestowed upon us by the Holy Spirit. Salvation through Christ not only fits us for worthy citizenship on earth, it makes us "heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (verse 7).

Titus 3 provides one of Scripture's clearest statements of salvation by grace resulting in good works.

THE CHRISTIAN CITIZEN (Titus 3:1-3).

To what important civic duties should Christians attend? Titus 3:1, 2 (compare 1 Peter 2:13-16; Rom. 13:1-3).

"Here is laid down the public duty of the Christian; and it is advice which was particularly relevant to the people of Crete. The Cretans were notoriously turbulent and quarrelsome and impatient of all authority. Polybius, the Greek historian, said of them that they were constantly involved in 'insurrections, murders and internecine wars.'"—William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, p. 258.

Every new generation of Christians should be made aware of its responsibilities to civil authorities. As Christians we are to follow Scriptural principles under all circumstances. This includes activity designed to improve the communities in which we live and hearty support of those responsible for law and order. If we isolate ourselves from community projects, we automatically erect a barrier between the church and society.

How does Paul summarize the personality and character problems of those who do not know Christ? Titus 3:3.

There is a marked contrast between the attitudes and lifestyles of unregenerate worldlings and born-again Christians. Because they are slaves to sin, "the works of the flesh" dominate the lives of unbelievers. These works exclude the doers from eternal life (Rom. 6:23; Gal. 5:21; Rev. 21:8). By contrast, "the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22, 23) characterizes the life of the Christian. It is a life-experience of being "in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1), in which the Spirit enables and leads believers to be "sons [and daughters] of God" (Rom. 8:14). The privilege of belonging to the family of God is never achieved through human effort or human goodness—it comes about by surrender to the will and power of God (John 1:13).

In what ways are you and your church involved in community services? What other kinds of activity can you think of that would be a blessing both to the community and to the church?

SAVED BY THE NEW BIRTH (Titus 3:4-6).

What method of seeking salvation is ruled out by the gospel? Titus 3:4, 5 (compare Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16).

A man who is condemned to unconditional life in prison can never earn his release by good behavior. Sinners who are condemned to eternal death can never earn eternal life by doing good works. Our efforts are always insufficient to pay the penalty of sin. This does not mean that the Ten Commandments are no longer binding upon Christians. God's law is the standard of righteousness to be obeyed by His people. (See Rom. 3:31; 7:7; 8:3, 4; James 2:10-12; 1 John 2:4; Rev. 12:17.) But it is not the required obedience that releases us from condemnation to eternal death (Rom. 6:23). Christ's death alone, when accepted in faith by sinners, releases them from condemnation (Rom. 8:1). Then the law is established in their hearts, and they willingly obey it as the standard for life (Rom. 10:6-10).

What means does God's mercy lead Him to use in saving us from sin and eternal death? Titus 3:5, 6.

Note the phrase, "Jesus Christ our Saviour" (verse 6, last part). The most important truth in the gospel is that Christ died for our sins and rose to be our heavenly Mediator (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Because of His sacrifice, Christ's salvation includes the new-birth experience. The word translated "regeneration" means "rebirth." (See Titus 3:5, NIV.) This involves "renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior" (verses 5, 6, NIV).

"In the new birth the heart is brought into harmony with God, as it is brought into accord with His law. When this mighty change has taken place in the sinner, he has passed from death unto life, from sin unto holiness, from transgression and rebellion to obedience and loyalty. The old life of alienation from God has ended; the new life of reconciliation, of faith and love, has begun. Then 'the righteousness of the law' will 'be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' Romans 8:4."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 468.

Are you being renewed daily by the Holy Spirit? (See 2 Cor. 4:16.)

SAVED BY JUSTIFICATION (Titus 3:7).

What term does Paul use synonymously with "saved"? What are the immediate results of being saved? Titus 3:7.

The Greek of this verse may be translated: "so that having been justified by His grace." It is incorrect to translate this phrase: "so that we might be justified." The word "justified" (verse 7) is used synonymously with the word "saved" (verse 5). Paul is saying: "He saved us . . . so that having been justified. . . ." In other words, *Justification is salvation*. (Compare Rom. 3:24; Gal. 3:11-14.)

How were we saved? "By the washing of rebirth and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). But God's saving act is His justifying act. Therefore we were justified by spiritual rebirth, the renewing of the Holy Spirit. Jesus told Nicodemus how to be saved (John 3:1-16). Paul repeated the message using somewhat different imagery.

Study these other passages of Scripture that identify justification with the new birth: Gal. 2:16, 19, 20; 3:1-3, 6-9, 14; Rom. 6:6, 7.

To be justified (Gal. 2:16) is to die to the law so that you might live for God (verse 19); it is to be crucified with Christ, so that Christ may live in you (verse 20). Justification is beginning anew with the Holy Spirit (Gal. 3:1-3); it is believing God as Abraham did, so that "the blessing of Abraham might come upon [you]"—"the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal. 3:14, RSV).

The death of the "old man" (Rom. 6:6) is the new birth experience. To an unconverted man Ellen White wrote: "You know not what true conversion is. The old man is not dead in you."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 323. Romans 6:7 translates literally: "For he who died, has been justified from sin." The person who has died to sin has been born again or justified.

"Those who know not what it is to have an experience in the things of God, who know not what it is to be justified by faith, who have not the witness of the Spirit that they are accepted of Jesus Christ, are in need of being born again."—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, March 8, 1910.

WHAT ELSE IS INVOLVED IN JUSTIFICATION?

What two *legal* acts does God perform when He justifies us? (1) Acts 13:38, 39; Rom. 4:6-8; (2) Rom. 4:3, 23-25.

Justification is forgiveness for sin. Forgiveness involves both a legal and an experiential aspect. Our guilt is legally abolished when Christ forgives our sin, because He suffered for it on the cross. (See 1 John 2:2; 4:10.) And when God forgives, He not only destroys our past guilt, He transforms our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

"God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. . . . It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 114.

Since justification is forgiveness, justification includes transformation of heart.

Justification also involves the perfect righteousness of Christ counted for the believing sinner. "Christ's righteousness is accepted in place of man's failure, and God receives, pardons, justifies, the repentant, believing soul, treats him as though he were righteous, and loves him as He loves His Son. This is how faith is accounted righteousness."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 367.

Thus, when God justifies us, He does three things: (1) forgives our sin, (2) counts Christ's perfect righteousness for us, (3) gives us the new-birth experience.

Is this the Reformation understanding of Justification? In a number of places in his writings, Luther identified justification with the new birth. For example: "Justification is in reality a kind of rebirth in newness, as John says: who believe in his name and were born of God [John 1:12-13; 1 John 5:1]. Therefore, Paul calls baptism the 'washing of regeneration and renewal' [Titus 3:5] and Christ himself says, 'Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God' [John 3:3]. . . . By the same Spirit we are called righteous, a new creature of God and the first fruits of God's creatures, who according to his will brought us forth by his Word [2 Cor. 5:17; Jas. 1:18]."—"Theses on Faith and Law," 1535, *Luther's Works*, vol. 34, p. 113.

Similarly, John Calvin saw justification as "mystical union" with Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. (See *Institutes* III.xi.9-10.) Calvin taught that the righteousness of God is conferred upon the believer in justification. (See his *Commentary on Romans*, comments on Romans 3.)

FINAL COUNSELS TO TITUS (Titus 3:8-14).

How important was it that Titus should affirm to the believers the saving, justifying work of Christ? Titus 3:8, 14.

The whole purpose of Christ's work for us, including His transforming work in our hearts, is that we might have power to live according to His will. He lived and died "in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4, NIV).

The immediate result of the new birth, which is included in justification, is holiness of heart and holiness of behavior. (See Rom. 6:17-22.) Without a daily renewal of the justifying new-birth experience, we lack the power to do good works. Paul's counsel to Titus emphasized the importance of good works; the Cretans were to avoid evil in all its forms. But how? The new birth provides the power. (See 1 Cor. 6:9-11.)

How are believers to treat an individual who promotes divisive and profitless issues? Titus 3:10.

Paul reminds Titus once again of the ever-present trap into which all workers for Christ can fall. Verse 9 lists four areas in which it is both futile and hazardous to enter: (1) foolish questions, (2) genealogies, (3) contentions, and (4) strivings about the law.

Compare Paul's counsel to Timothy:

- 1 Timothy 1:4: The gospel worker is not to "give heed" to such things. Preoccupation with inconsequential arguments does not edify. They serve only to tear down the faith of believers.
- 1 Timothy 6:4: People who push unbiblical issues to the forefront are usually motivated by personal pride, and are ignorant of the truths that really count.
- 2 Timothy 2:22, 23: Avoiding controversy, Timothy was to seek righteousness, faith, love, and peace.

What do you think is incorporated in the term "good works" (Titus 3:8, 14)? Are our thoughts and words included in this term? Is it possible to maintain good behavior without having good thoughts?

FOR FURTHER STUDY: Study Romans 6 on the results of justification for the way we live. Read the chapter entitled "The Test of Discipleship" in *Steps to Christ*, pp. 57-65.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How would you answer a person who argues that including the new birth in justification is to reject the Reformation and to favor the Council of Trent position?

NOTE: (1) Paul included the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in the new-birth experience as part of his definition of justification by faith. (2) The leading Reformers of the sixteenth century (Luther and Calvin) defined justification as both legal and experiential. They saw the new birth as included in God's justifying act. (3) The Council of Trent (1545-1563) included the new birth in justification. But the fathers of Trent were influenced by the theology of Thomas Aquinas. They viewed the new birth as the process by which the soul is made intrinsically righteous, giving it the inherent ability to do works that earn merit with God. (4) The Bible and Reformation position is quite different: We remain intrinsically, inherently fallen human beings who are now indwelt by Christ. His presence in our hearts by the Holy Spirit is our righteousness. The new birth, which is included in justification, brings Christ by the Holy Spirit to our hearts. Our works are never meritorious; they are the result of Christ living out His life through us.

2. When would you consider it justifiable for a church congregation to ask an individual to forfeit his church membership? Consider this question in relation to the counsel contained in Titus 3:10, 11.
3. Which Scripture texts would you cite to explain salvation to an earnest inquirer?
4. How would you present a balanced view of the place of Christian obedience to God's law to someone who thinks the Ten Commandments were abolished at the cross?

SUMMARY: In this final chapter of Paul's letter to Titus, Paul reminds the Cretan Christians of their duties as Christian citizens. Christ is able to save all who come unto God through Him and to give them the grace to live exemplary lives.

Lessons for Fourth Quarter, 1993

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the adult Sabbath School lessons for the fourth quarter of 1993 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of the series is *God's Builders*. This quarter's lessons cover the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

First Lesson: Builders for God

MEMORY TEXT: Isaiah 6:8

Theme: Who is a builder for God? Why can ordinary persons do great exploits for God and others?

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ezra 2:1, 2; 3:8; 7:6, 11; Neh. 1:11; 5:14; 8:1, 2; Dan. 8:2-4, 20; Hag. 1:1.

Second Lesson: Going Home

MEMORY TEXT: Psalm 126:1, 2

Theme: Permission to return to Judah astonished and excited the exiles, yet only a few thousand actually went home. Likewise, God's people will be delirious with happiness when Jesus appears in glory. What preparation is necessary for participation in heaven's homecoming?

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ezra 1, 2.

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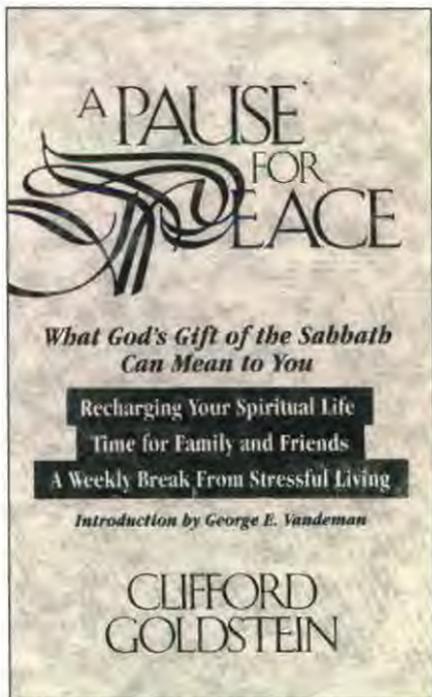
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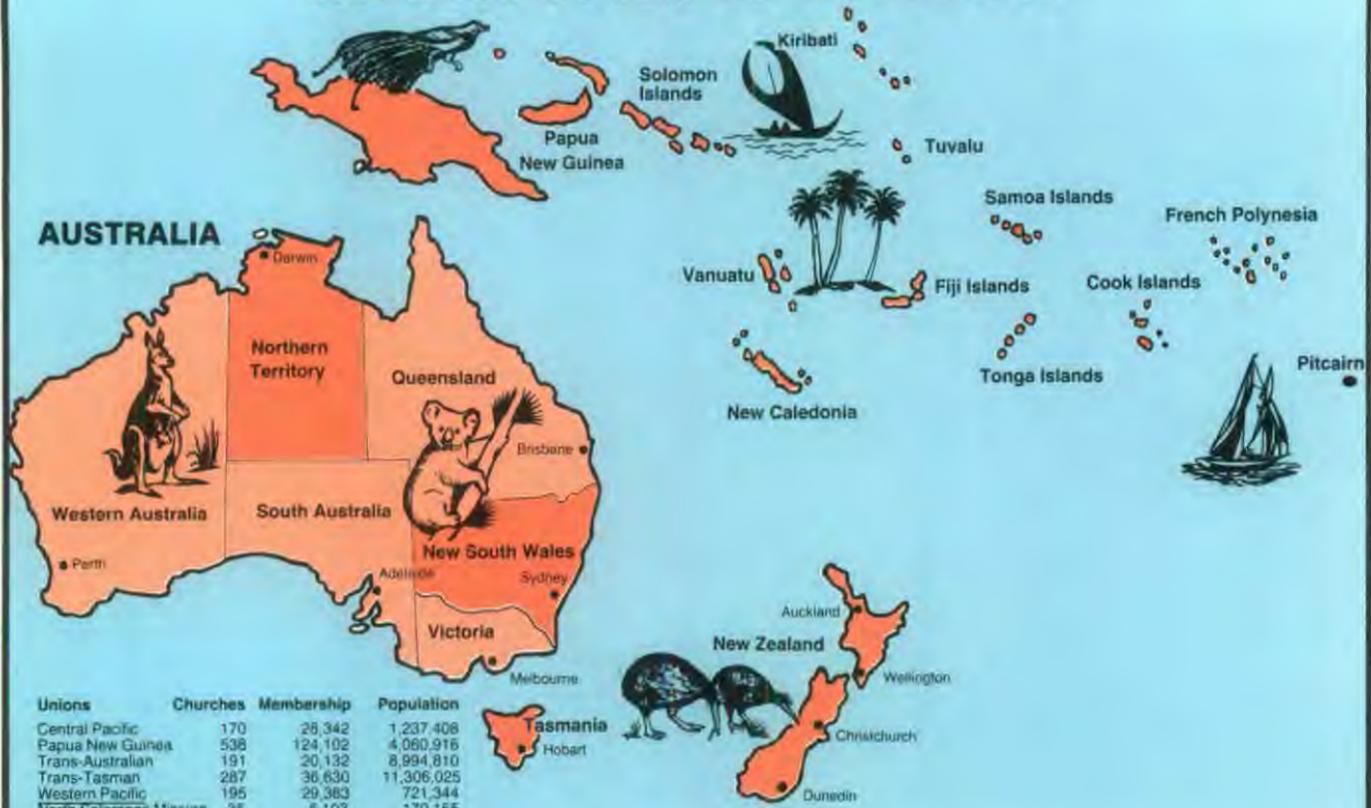


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